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METHODISM AND CHILDREN:

BEING

SELECTIONS FROM THE MANUSCRIPTS

OF THE LATE

REV. SAMUEL JACKSON,

WESLEYAN MINISTER.

"Mr. Wesley avowed his belief that the late revival of religion in this country was the beginning of the 'latter-day glory;' and if those who inherit his name and principles go on to do for children what was formerly done for adults, even his hope is very likely to be realized."—*Page* 219.

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INTRODUCTION.

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It will be known to most readers of this volume that the late Rev. Samuel Jackson was for many years an earnest student of the great question of juvenile evangelization. This resulted in a settled conviction that Methodism "should prepare for a bolder flight than had ever yet been attempted;" that, "instead of merely seeking to reclaim apostates from their baptism, she should seek to fulfil the high ends of baptism itself;" and that "no existing community was so likely to turn the beautiful and Scriptural theory of that ordinance into a living reality, by the actual conversion of a large proportion of her children to a life of light, love, and obedience to Christ." Three years before his death, and when he had at last satisfied himself as to "the best way of ingrafting Methodism upon the practice of infant baptism," he embodied his final recommendations on this subject in the following *Plan for the religious treatment of baptized children.*

"1. The will is to be gained; and that is influenced by arguments: therefore let the first years of childhood be chiefly spent in considering the evidence that man is an accountable being, entirely under the control of Jesus Christ, and the reasons why we should submit to Him.

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"2. During the later years of childhood, let suitable means be used in order to ascertain whether the young person does freely accept of Jesus Christ, and consent to become His servant.

"3. Let all who do this be committed to the care of some experienced Christian; if possible, to a Methodist Class-leader, and taught the way of the Lord more perfectly.

"4. Since, in Methodism, meeting in class is connected with matters of finance; in order to obviate all inconveniences of that nature, let the young persons, thus admitted into the Society, remain 'on trial' as long as the Minister and Leader deem it expedient.

"5. Let the adult church of Methodism, including Ministers, Leaders, and private members, ever remember that it is her special duty to see that all this be really done. If necessary, she must appoint new assistants in this department."

The Papers contained in the present volume have been selected with a special reference to this "Plan," and in order—as far as the materials at command would admit—to explain and enforce its leading principles. Three important points are here more particularly brought under consideration, namely,—The obligations of the adult church to the rising generation,—The awakening of the conscience in early life,—and The religious Examination of young people. These Papers were the productions of Mr. Jackson's later years; and, with some few exceptions, have not before appeared in print. They consist of Sermons and Addresses, extracts from Letters, and various other MSS., in which—thinking they might be useful "at some time"—he had noted down the views of this subject presented to him as he sat,

day after day, revolving it in his mind, and which were left in his study when suddenly summoned from its beloved retirement.

Those who most fully understood his feelings on this question, and that overpowering sense of religious obligation which constrained him, "in season," and "out of season," to press it on the notice of the Connexion,—who witnessed his labours of unwearied love in this cause, sustained by a hope of its final success, that every degree of "advancing light" served only to strengthen and confirm,—who stood by his dying bed, and heard him say, even in that solemn hour, that he was still thinking of the "children,"—feel it a sacred duty, as they have opportunity, to commit to the press the Manuscripts in which his full heart found relief and utterance. The kind reception given to those recently published, under the title of EARLY CONVERSION, has encouraged them to venture on a second attempt, and to anticipate for this smaller Selection a still wider circulation.

A retired Wesleyan Minister is here speaking to his own people; and to them this volume is respectfully submitted. Nothing, he well knew, would serve his cause but "convincing arguments," and "sound speech that cannot be condemned;" and every sentiment here expressed was carefully thought out, and weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, before it was committed to writing; with unceasing prayer that God would

show His servants "the best way of spreading His Gospel in the world." To all earnest and intelligent Methodists, who are thinking and labouring for the salvation of souls and the evangelization of the country, the appeal of their departed friend in these pages is,—what it was, in years gone by, from his living voice,—"*I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say.*"

April 8th, 1867.

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Part First.

"Christians are to remember that they have a Master in heaven. They are the servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. From Him they have received the Gospel they possess. He has told them how it is to be used. Before Him they must one day stand as their Judge. Their simple business is to obey His commands, to fulfil His designs, and thus prepare to give to Him a satisfactory account of what they have done."

I.

GOD'S MODE OF PROCEDURE.

He has generally begun with adults, and gone from them to children. When the law was given to the Jews, God first appealed to the men and women, then to their descendants. "These words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children." This teaching was intended to produce regeneration, or the living principle of religion, which was to operate practically throughout life. It is said in the book of Psalms that Jewish children were to be taught these words, that they might not prove, in mature age, like their fathers, "a stubborn and rebellious generation;" but might "set their hope in God," and "keep His commandments." At the beginning of the Gospel dispensation Christ pursued the same course. At His command, the Apostles "went forth, and preached every where," but chiefly to adults. Already their Master had said to His followers, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me; for of such is the kingdom of God;" and in accordance with His words, St. Paul directed Christian parents to bring up their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Jesus, during His public ministry, had severely rebuked the Pharisees; He spoke with dislike of a lifeless religion in the church of Sardis; and, assuredly, when He gave these directions respecting children, had no intention to train them up to be merely Christian formalists and hypocrites. We are confirmed in our belief that the late religious revival in this country emanated from Him, because it proceeded in a similar way. Early Methodist

preachers were the honoured instruments in saving baptized adults; and we are now to carry out what they began, and be employed in the regeneration of children.

But the great difficulty in this undertaking is its apparent impossibility, and the supposed uselessness of the attempt. This, it is said, may be God's mode of proceeding; but it is utterly impracticable by man. Children are so full of levity, and so accustomed to trifle, that they cannot be made sufficiently serious and thoughtful. Some, indeed, have made a profession of religion; but even that has been but for a time. We reply, that the practicability of this work is not man's concern, but belongs exclusively to God. Our entire business is simply to obey His commands. Probably to the Israelites it appeared altogether unlikely that the walls of Jericho would fall flat to the ground. Still, they were directed to march round the city, and to sound the rams' horns, on seven successive days. The miracle was to be wrought by Divine power; and their only business was to observe the instructions they had received. Since it is God's method to regenerate children by evangelical instruction, the sole duty of His people is to assume that what He contemplates can be done; to adapt their machinery to the work; and then honestly endeavour, each in his own department, and according to his ability, to fulfil the Divine intentions. Let no man say this is already done. Whatever has been effected by schools and teachers, as yet, ministers and adult churches have been comparatively inactive. This is plain from the dimensions of our churches, and the moral state of the country. Christianity is in harmony with itself. When the directions of its Author are obeyed, His predictions will be in course of fulfilment. Should vital religion be transmitted to children, from generation to generation, the ultimate triumph of Christianity in the world becomes a matter of course.

II.

THE CASE STATED.

(From an Address on "The Combination to extend Methodism through baptized Children.")

Our great design is to extend Methodism. We have no wish to alter the system, either in its form or principles; but seek simply to extend it. We think and say of true Methodism,—The more, the better. The diffusion of its living spirit and power will be an advantage to individuals, and to the entire community.

We are seeking to extend Methodism chiefly through baptized children. Some are doing this by preaching the Gospel to heathen nations abroad, and others by seeking to convert adult sinners at home. With these excellent persons we have no dispute or contest. Most heartily do we wish them "good luck in the name of the Lord." While Peter preached to Jews, Paul went unto the Gentiles. While so many are seeking to convert men and women to Christ, we hope we shall be permitted to labour for the salvation of children, whether at home with their parents or gathered into our Sunday-schools.

It is right frankly to state that we are not satisfied either with what has been already done, or with the actual working of the present state of things. Still we very thankfully admit that a very great amount of religious good has been effected. God has made us a people, who were not a people. Many are now members of our Society, who were once living

without God in the world. Public morals are greatly improved. People generally are more intelligent and decent than they formerly were; and although the country is twice as populous as it once was, there are fewer deeds of rude and outrageous wickedness. Yet, as England is called a Christian nation, there is still ample room for improvement. Among ourselves, a great deal is done for the religious instruction of the young; but the actual results do not appear to us to be proportionate to the means employed. Our friends give their time and their labour and their money in conducting and supporting our Sunday-schools; and yet, after completing their education, but a small proportion of the scholars become members of Society, while the great majority go and live according to the course of the present world.

Not only have we Sunday-schools, but we also administer Christian baptism in our chapels. Indeed, perhaps all the children connected in any way with Methodism have been baptized, by one denomination or another. In the days of infancy they are dedicated or given to the Triune God; His name is put upon them; it is said that they are "born in sin," it is asked of God that they may be "born anew, of water and of the Holy Ghost;" and then they are returned to their parents to be brought up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

Now, infant baptism is but the first step towards a true and an early conversion to God. Infants are baptized in order that as soon as they become personally responsible, and are capable of acting for themselves, they may choose to be the soldiers and servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. At the same time it is a notorious fact that, while all the children among us are baptized, comparatively few are converted in early life. Many live without God till they come to be men and women; and many, so far as we can ascertain, are never brought to repentance at all. No thoughtful man can be content

with such a state of things as this. If human beings cannot be converted in early life, there seems but little use in baptizing infants; if they can, then arrangements should be made, without delay, for securing so desirable a result.

To make some effort of this nature seems to be especially incumbent upon the Methodists. Our system has always professed to be an extraordinary attempt to supply the deficiencies of the National church. We have not quarrelled with the doctrines of the Establishment, nor have we much to say about her discipline; but we have always complained of her formality and want of the spirit of inward, living religion, and have felt that we were called upon to do what we could for the purpose of supplying these serious deficiencies.

So far as adults are concerned, this Methodism has actually done. When the two Wesleys and Whitefield began their career, the inhabitants of this country were told, from many pulpits, that they were already a truly Christian people, that they had been regenerated in baptism, that they were members of the church, and needed, at most, but a few slight improvements in their moral character, and then they had nothing to fear. At the same time, cursing and swearing, drunkenness and Sabbath-breaking, ungodliness in all its forms, continued to increase and abound, all over the country. The zealous Methodists saw, at once, it was of no use to go on in such a course as this. Hence they began to preach abroad, and told the people, plainly, that they were yet in their sins; that they must be "born again;" and that without repentance and pardon they would all inevitably perish. God was with these faithful men, and crowned their labours with His blessing. Multitudes, through their instrumentality, exchanged the outward form of religion for its inward power. Instead of amusing themselves with dreams and shadows, they felt the substantial blessedness of the man "whose ini-

quities are forgiven, and whose sin is covered." There was joy in heaven over sinners brought to repentance; and angels sang, "The dead's alive, the lost is found."

God having so greatly blessed the Methodists in their first attempt, that should encourage them to venture upon a second. He has enabled them to convert many wicked adults, and He will enable them to convert many children. By the help of His Spirit they have succeeded in reclaiming many who had departed from their baptism; and by the same Spirit they will succeed in fulfilling the high and holy design of that Christian ordinance. When the early Methodist preachers undertook to evangelize the masses of the people in this country, they were told that success was impossible. In like manner we are now told that it is impossible to convert mere children, and of no use to make the attempt. They are ignorant, thoughtless, and giddy. They have indeed been baptized; but what can you expect from children? If you preach to them, they cannot understand; and if at any time their hearts are impressed, their goodness is but as the early dew, which "goeth away."

All, however, do not regard the subject with feelings of misgiving and discouragement. Many things in the Gospel can be easily understood; the Spirit of God can impress the heart at a very early age; conscience speaks in those who are very young; and children, properly treated, by the time they attain to personal responsibility, and begin to act for themselves, may be quite prepared voluntarily to renounce the devil and all his works, with the pomps and vanities of this wicked world; to become Christ's soldiers and servants; and to keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of their life. At any rate, we mean to try what can be done.

III.

THE END TO BE SECURED.

It is not uncommon to ask many questions as to the way in which Christian children are to be treated. How are we to begin, and how are we to proceed, in carrying out the design of baptism, and conducting young people to holiness and heaven? The chief direction which Christ has given to His servants, in relation to this matter, is, that when communicating His Gospel they are to be careful to do it *effectually*. When Paul was sent to the Gentiles he was not told what sort of sermons he was to preach, nor where and how they were to be delivered; but he was "to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light." Apostles were sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; and they were to prove that Jesus was the Christ, and bring them to believe on His name. St. James supposed that a baptized brother might fall into sin; should any Christians pity his case, and wish to be of service to him, the Apostle tells them at once the nature of the work they had to do. The man must be converted "from the error of his way." It was only by success that they could "save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins."

In religiously dealing with the young, we are mainly to look at the *results* of our efforts. God has clearly announced His design when He says of Abraham, "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment." While children are young, of course they must be under control. They must be commanded after God, if they are ever to

begin to walk in His ways. But then, the result of their early treatment must be to lead them, as a matter of choice, to "keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment." It is only in this way that God can fulfil His promises, and bring upon them that which He hath spoken. God Himself, by His Spirit, works upon the hearts of little children; but the result of His inward operations is to gain their own consent to His covenant, and to lead them to resolve to become His servants for ever. "I will," He says, "pour out My Spirit upon thy seed, and My blessing upon thine offspring;" and then, as the result of this dispensation of mercy, "one shall say, I am the Lord's, and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel." Whatever we may do for our children, the result must be the same. "He that winneth souls is wise;" and he who fails to win them blunders, and mistakes his course. Our plan of treatment may be comparatively mild or severe; we may adhere to ancient methods of teaching, or we may adopt all the modern improvements; but the great practical issue of the whole must be, to lead our young people themselves, at a proper age, to say to Christ, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

We shall, however, very probably be told that it is of no use attempting this; for it is impossible to succeed. Boys and girls always have been and always will be like Gallio, caring for none of these things. You may ask them to complete their baptism, by submitting to Christ, but they will reply only with, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee."

But that success was impossible, and therefore all attempts were useless, has always been the argument employed by unbelief and disobedience. When the people of Israel came out of Egypt, being unwilling to

undertake the conquest of Canaan, the spies returned with an evil report, and declared its subjugation was altogether impossible. When the servant who had received one talent was disposed to bury it in the earth, rather than improve it by trading, he declared that his master was unreasonable in his demands, and required what was impossible. When called to account for his conduct, he said to his Lord, "I knew thee, that thou art an hard man." Feeling myself wholly unable to fulfil thy expectations, I concluded it was useless to make the attempt; and so, instead of trading, "I went and hid thy talent in the earth." But, notwithstanding this apology, he was truly nothing but a "wicked and slothful servant." When John Mark proceeded on a Missionary tour to Asia Minor, he went into the land but a little way. Not liking the appearance of the country, and being unwilling to penetrate it any further, he concluded it was impossible to plant Christianity there, and declined making the attempt. Accordingly, taking leave of Paul and Barnabas, he returned to Jerusalem. But, notwithstanding his opinion and impressions, his departure was solely attributable to his slothfulness, cowardice, and unbelief. When people say that it is impossible to prevail upon the young to complete their baptism by "the answer of a good conscience toward God," it is because they are unwilling to undertake the trouble and difficulty of making the attempt.

Young persons, in general, have little inclination to be serious and religious; hence they are very apt to look upon early piety as a difficult and impossible thing. Yet they mean to be religious at some time; but they think of some later period of life. It is expected, however, that religious people will hold a different language, and give them better advice. If they begin to talk as thoughtless unconverted youths are heard to talk, and to speak of the difficulty and impossibility of early

religion, they will all mistake together. This will be to imitate the Ephesians, when all, for about the space of two hours, united in crying, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." Yet Diana had received her death-stroke by the preaching of Paul, and has long since sunk into oblivion. Religious people, we hope, will not countenance mistaken youths about the impossibility of an early conversion; but will say to them, "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

IV.

CHRISTIANS CALLED TO INSTRUCT CHILDREN.

"Then said He unto them, Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old."—MATT. xiii. 52.

IN the parable of the good Samaritan there is a case involving a distinct providential call to the performance of a particular duty. It is true that there was no voice from heaven, directing that kind-hearted man to aid the poor sufferer by the way-side, nor was he himself able to call for assistance; but all the circumstances of his affecting case appealed to the passing traveller, in language it was impossible for him to misunderstand or disregard. There was, accordingly, on his part, an answer to this providential call; for he went to the helpless sufferer, bound up his wounds, removed him to a suitable place, and made arrangements for his receiving all further needful care and attention.

There is another call—similar and yet different—addressed to all adult and instructed Christians, on behalf of those who are younger and, religiously, more ignorant than themselves. For the Scriptural instruction of succeeding generations, God has made a clear, formal, and authorized provision. Many centuries ago, "He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel," which He commanded the fathers to make known to their children. Besides which, the ignorance and inexperience of young people, their capabilities and temptations, their immortality and

responsibility, —all the circumstances of their case,— call upon those who have lived longer and know better, to tell them what they have heard respecting Christ and His salvation. If reason has an ear, if Providence has a language, if danger and necessity can make themselves intelligible,—then is every adult Christian called by God to become "a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, and a teacher of babes," in all those things which concern our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is necessary and important that the followers of Christ should be duly qualified for the efficient discharge of this great Christian duty. The entire body of believers are to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ," and to let the word of Christ dwell in them "richly in all wisdom;" that they may be prepared to make Him known to those who are growing up around them, as occasion may require. A prudent and munificent householder takes care to have his treasury, or larder, richly stored with provisions; so that he can, on proper occasions, supply the necessities and gratify the tastes of his guests by "things new and old:" and all true Christians are to prepare themselves to gain the attention of the young, to pour evangelical light into their minds, and to make a deep and saving impression upon their hearts.

If we look around us, and duly consider our present position, we shall feel ourselves at once called upon to evince this evangelical hospitality, and to enter upon this work of spiritual distribution. What are the multitudes of children and young people by whom we are surrounded? They are the parties invited by Christ Himself to the Gospel feast; and they are directed to apply to us, that they may eat and be filled. In truth, the youthful guests are already assembled, and are waiting to be fed; and therefore we must go out and meet them, open our treasures, call in the aid of our friends, and place before them such things as

we have. On no account must they be sent empty away; lest it should one day be said to us by our Judge, "You did not feed these ignorant and destitute souls; and inasmuch as ye did it not to them, ye did it not to Me, and must therefore be treated as the workers of iniquity."

We find the same call to the same duty, altered, and repeated, and urged with increasing earnestness, in several parables delivered by our Lord, and recorded in this chapter.

I. Such a call is clearly involved in the parable of *The Sower*. To open the general import and meaning of this parable is at present unnecessary; but it cannot be denied that it was intended to represent a case of mortifying failure and disappointment. Reference is here made to four classes of hearers; only one of which so heard the Gospel as to be saved by its power. It is perfectly plain, however, that the parable refers principally to the case of *adult* sinners, and to the efforts made for their instruction and salvation. Herein are described, in the first instance, the results of our Lord's personal ministry, and the deplorable character of the unhappy people who actually heard His matchless discourses. They are spoken of as persons addicted to a course of sin, and who had long been accustomed to resist the Holy Ghost. Their case is stated in the answer returned by our Lord to the question of His disciples, —"Why speakest Thou unto them in parables?" Whatever may be the exact meaning of His terrible expressions, they plainly refer, not to children, but to adults; for if the parties had not lived many years, they could not have become such proficients in wickedness, and such examples of the power of sin to darken the understanding, and to harden the heart. Jesus addressed these people "in parables," partly, to make them sensible of their fearful character and condition; without producing undue irritation, or giving needless offence.

They were here, with great tenderness, given to understand that they had continued in sin until their hearts had become the highway of evil spirits,—hardened like the face of a rock,—ground which bore only thorns and briars.

Precisely the same things may now be said respecting all who have lived many years, and, instead of submitting to Christ, have followed the devices and desires of their own hearts, and lived according to the course of this world. All history and all experience abundantly demonstrate that, although such persons may hear the Gospel, but a small proportion of them will resemble "good ground," into which when the seed fell, it "brought forth fruit."

What, now, is the great practical inference which we are to draw from these Divine representations? Here is a large number of persons who had heard the Gospel, while but few of them were saved by its power. These were chiefly adults, who had stopped their ears and closed their eyes, by long and confirmed habits of wickedness; and for this reason they remained unsubdued and unsaved. Are not these things to us a loud and providential call to become the instructors of the *young?* Their hearts are not yet like the highway-side, laid open and exposed to every intruder, but are still under somebody's protection. Nor are they yet altogether "hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." If there are within them moral thorns, and other roots of bitterness, these, by the hand of a vigorous discipline, may be torn up and removed. Here, therefore, is "good ground," into which we should hasten to cast the Gospel seed; since here it is likely to take root, and bring forth fruit, thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold.

II. The same great evangelical call is also involved in the parable of *The wheat and the tares.* We have here an affecting exhibition of that sad mixture of good and evil which, ever since the Apostolic age, has char-

acterized the visible church of Christ. In this field our blessed Saviour and His holy Apostles sowed the good, the celestial seed of pure evangelical truth. Watchmen were left to watch; but they fell asleep, and then an "enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way." Not only have these tares continued to flourish to the present day, but from age to age they have been growing more and more rank and luxuriant; and by them, to a sad extent, the good seed has been choked and destroyed. What then are we to do? Is the church to be left without any hope of improvement, and to remain, for ever, a field of wheat and of tares growing together? Prophecy certainly encourages us to hope for better days, and to expect a time when it will resemble a field which the Lord delights to bless, "filled with all the fruits of righteousness."

These circumstances distinctly call us to the work of religiously instructing the *young*. Every succeeding generation of mankind opens before the evangelical husbandman a new tract of soil, waiting for cultivation. We are therefore to imitate the man who, in the first instance, sowed good seed in his field; and we are to avoid the unfaithfulness of the watchmen to whose care it was afterwards committed, and who fell asleep when they should have kept awake. We read that the enemy who sowed the tares is "the devil," and are told that although he goes about "as a roaring lion," he is an inherent coward, and, if resisted, "will flee" from us. We must, therefore, put ourselves into an attitude of opposition, and tell this great adversary of God and man that he will no longer proceed without interruption in his career of malice and mischief,—that, although he has sown his tares in the hearts of our fathers, he will not be allowed to do the same with our children. Make him distinctly to understand that a new race of husbandmen and of watchmen has been raised up; who are determined,

first, to cultivate this new soil which has been rendered accessible in the hearts of our young people, and then, not to sleep, but to watch and defend it by night and by day; and he will soon experience feelings of discouragement and of despair. A new state of things will begin to dawn upon our world, which will result in its being filled "with golden fruit, with ripe millennial love."

III. The parables of *The grain of mustard-seed*, and of *The leaven hid in three measures of meal*, also distinctly call us to the same duty. Probably they both have a general application, and are intended to describe the progress of the Gospel, and the enlargement of the church. They have also a personal application, and shew the advancement of the work of God in the soul of man. A tree cannot be produced unless its proper seed be first of all put into the earth; and human nature will never be adorned with a devout and holy life without evangelical instruction, and the communication of that incorruptible seed "which liveth and abideth for ever." That seed may at first appear to be small and unpromising; but when lodged in the soil of a human heart, it unfolds itself in a character beautiful and blessed, like a large and fruitful tree. Leaven is a principle which is found to ferment and spread, till it has diffused itself through and changed the nature of the entire mass into which it has been put; and evangelical instruction is equally powerful to illuminate and sanctify apostate human nature.

Seeds, when sown, must have time to grow, and leaven, when deposited, must have time to operate and diffuse itself; and so the Gospel, after it has entered a human heart, must have time to put forth its energy, and unfold its glories, in a life of righteousness and true holiness. All this tells us to drop the seed of evangelical truth into the human heart *in early life*, that those who grow in years may grow in grace, and

rise into "trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord's right hand." Put the celestial leaven into the hearts of children, that when of mature age they may be sanctified wholly, and in the end be presented faultless in the presence of the Divine glory with exceeding joy.

This great result, however, will never be produced without human instrumentality. Even adults are seldom, if ever, converted to God without the aid of their fellow-creatures; but such assistance is still more urgently needed in the case of our children. They are never likely to receive either the small seed or the celestial leaven, unless those who are older and wiser than themselves will be at the expense and trouble of putting it into their hearts. Nor will this be found to be a work of great cost and difficulty, provided there is first a willing mind, and that which is practicable is but honestly attempted. Any man or any woman who loves our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity may, with success, teach the Gospel to children, and thus become the instrument of leading them to wisdom, to holiness, and to heaven.

IV. The parables of *The treasure hid in a field* and *The pearl of great price* next demand our attention; and no adult Christian can seriously consider the import and bearing of these two impressive representations without feeling himself called upon to become the evangelical guide and teacher of those who are younger and more ignorant than himself. Children who have been admitted into the Christian church by baptism, who have been taught to read, are made acquainted with the Bible, and accustomed to attend the ordinances of the Gospel, have been put in possession of a field which is indeed "a goodly heritage." There is not merely a surface covered with verdure and beauty, with flowers and fruits, but there is a treasure "hid" in this "field"; for down below are mines too deep to be fathomed, too vast to be measured, and more

valuable than silver and gold. Are you not then distinctly called to direct the attention of these young people to this important circumstance? Even intelligent adults will often walk over their own grounds, for years together, admiring everything around them, while they are totally ignorant even of the existence of the mines which are buried below. After these have been discovered, they often need much advice and persuasion to induce them to sell their other property and embark all their capital in working these mines, and thus secure the riches they contain. Children are eminently ignorant and thoughtless; they know nothing of the existence of these treasures; and, without assistance, are never likely to find them. You know the wealth hid in the Gospel field, and that it is their wisdom to sell all that they have in order to make it their own. Is it not therefore perfectly plain that you are called upon, both by their ignorance and your own better information, to become their teachers, to call their attention to this hidden treasure, and, if possible, to prevail upon them to secure it, even if it be by selling all that they have?

All people need assistance in the purchase of pearls and diamonds and other similarly precious things. Even a skilful merchant, whose attention had been directed to some "pearl of great price," exceeding in value all that he had ever seen before, and which he could not purchase without first selling all his other property, would think long and take advice before he actually bought it. Children, without instruction, are unable to distinguish between a pearl and a pebble; and many attempts are made to induce them to purchase, as pearls of great price, things which, in truth, are not pearls of any kind. Now, their ignorance and inexperience, their temptations and dangers, appeal to your compassion, and ask you to befriend and assist them. You may indeed stand by and look on, when a pearl of great price is offered to them, and they hesitate about making

the purchase, because they are ignorant of its worth,—or you may see them inclined to purchase pebbles, thinking them to be pearls,—and afford them no information on the subject. It may be true that in so doing you commit no crime, and inflict no positive wrong; but it is equally true, that you establish no claim upon the gratitude of these children, and will never receive the thanks of their parents and friends. Those whose conduct is regulated by a similar principle in the religious treatment of the young people by whom they are surrounded fail to imitate the Saviour, "who gave Himself a ransom for all;" and will never receive the approval of Him whose will it is that not "one of these little ones should perish."

V. In the parable of *The draw-net cast into the sea* we are taught that children, as well as ourselves, are placed in very solemn circumstances. Many of them have been baptized in the name of Jesus; and all of them are subject to His authority. We may be ignorant of Christ, or we may be acquainted with Him; we may remember, or we may forget Him; but His absolute and universal dominion embraces and covers us, like the meshes of a prodigious net, and before His judgment-seat we must all appear; for from His power it is impossible to escape. Within the sweep of this vast net are included the bad and the good; and they must all at last undergo a careful examination. "At the end of the world, the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just."

But if this is the true and solemn position of our children, it is obviously our duty to prevail on them to enter on a course of preparation for the judgment to which they are hastening. It would be an act of great unkindness not to tell them that they are the subjects of the British crown, and amenable to the laws of the country in which they live; but it is monstrous cruelty not to make them understand that they are under the gracious rule of a Mediator, and

that by submitting to Him they are to be saved. Besides, we have been informed on these subjects ourselves, for the express purpose of informing them. We understand the fact of Christ's dominion over all flesh, and the doctrine of a day of judgment, only by revelation; and the God who taught us these things has commanded us to teach them to our children.

Of all the righteous characters here represented, and of whom it is said that, in a future world, they "shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father," not one was originally holy. They were all made good after they became enclosed in the Gospel net. All of them are sinners saved by grace. How was this wonderful transformation brought about? It is all the result of evangelical instruction. They heard of Christ, they believed in His name, were pardoned by His mercy, and sanctified by His power. By evangelical instruction our children may be prepared for the judgment that awaits them. The Gospel which prepares us will also prepare them; and all the circumstances of their case appeal to adult Christians, in language it is impossible for us either to misunderstand or disregard.

V.

SUNDAY SCHOOLS AND CHRISTIAN MISSIONS:

CONSIDERED IN THEIR PRINCIPLE, AND IN THEIR EQUAL EFFICIENCY AS INSTRUMENTS IN EVANGELIZING THE WORLD.

It will be at once admitted, by every believer in the New Testament, that Christ has, from the beginning, contemplated the subjection of the world to Himself, and that this is the great end of His mediation. This is partly to be accomplished by moral means, and is to be completed by compulsion. By the mingled power of light and love, many hearts will be subdued to Christ. The preaching of the Gospel was appointed "for obedience unto the faith among all nations;" and by its grace and teaching, man after man, and kingdom after kingdom, will fall at the feet of the Saviour, and say, "Lord, what wilt Thou have us to do?"

The subjection of the world to Christ, begun and carried on by truth and love, will be completed by a display of the Redeemer's power and wrath. To all classes of people, to kings and subjects, it has been said, "Kiss the Son;" hasten to perform the appointed act of homage and voluntary submission to His rule. If you fail to do this, He will "be angry;" and should His wrath be kindled "but a little," you will "perish from the way." Respecting all such it is added, "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." Messiah must reign till He has put down all authority and power opposed to His own. The kingdoms of

this world are to become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ, and He is to reign "for ever and ever."

This great achievement is now in a state of actual progress, and has to some extent received its accomplishment. Many have not only been baptized in the name of Christ, but have accepted His offers, and consented to His laws. These constitute His mystical body. He is the Head, and they are the members. He is the Vine, and they are the branches. He is the Shepherd, and they are the flock. Of them it may be said, God hath translated them from the power of darkness into the kingdom of His dear Son. Here we see so much territory won from the enemy of God and man, a number of rebels converted into loyal subjects, and the partial fulfilment of God's great design of mercy.

Yet, notwithstanding all the glorious victories which Christ has already gained, there still remains very much land to be possessed. A very large proportion of the entire race of Adam is still to be subdued to His gracious authority. There is, first of all, the vast number of children daily born into the world. All these are not Christians by nature. They are "born in sin;" in other words, they are born heathens. They may afterwards become Christians; but that depends upon the instruction they receive, and the manner in which they are treated. All must be baptized and taught, and brought up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;" if they are to bow to the dominion of Christ, and become His faithful subjects and servants.

Besides these incipient heathens, there are multitudes of matured heathens. Great numbers of persons "born in sin" have grown up without any Christian instruction, and have been left very much to follow the devices and desires of their own hearts; and what is the consequence? Some of them have become

baptized profligates; there are entire nations of gross and grovelling idolaters, and numerous tribes of savages and cannibals. All these are the slaves of sin and Satan, and remain to be instructed and converted before the world is fully subdued to Christ.

This great end is to be sought, in the first place, by the employment of the Sunday-school Principle and of the Missionary Principle. This brings us to the consideration of these two great evangelical instrumentalities.

We begin with the *Sunday-school Principle.* This consists in imparting the Gospel to *undeveloped* heathens. We have said that all children are "born in sin," and that to be born in sin is to be born a heathen. From this it follows, that if they are left without evangelical care and culture, they will grow up into some form of practical heathenism. What that precise form may be, we are unable to say. The spirit of heathenism can assume an endless variety of shapes. All heathens are not cannibals or savages; all heathens are not idolaters; but all heathens are "without hope, and without God in the world." We know that every acorn, if developed at all, will become an oak; but we cannot tell the exact form which the tree will assume. We know that a child, if religiously neglected, will grow into a godless and wicked character; as certainly as we know that seeds will produce fruit after their kind, and that buds will expand into flowers. The Sunday-school Principle, therefore, is essentially *preventive.* It anticipates the future. Assuming that prevention is better than cure, it does not stay until original sin has ripened into some form of actual wickedness. It grapples with it at once, and by an application of the Gospel, seeks to quench the sparks before they have kindled into a flame, and to crush the egg before it has broken out into a viper. All this is perfectly possible. If the Gospel is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth," then

it can save from sin the child as well as the man. This is what the Sunday-school Principle seeks to accomplish. This it has actually effected, in cases innumerable. This it will bring to pass on a still wider scale, when it comes to be better understood, and to be more skilfully as well as more extensively applied.

The *Missionary Principle* in some respects resembles, but in others differs from, that which we have already considered. Christian Missions, indeed, preach the same Gospel; but they offer it to a different class of people. In modern times we have Foreign Missions, and Home Missions, and City Missions; but these all contemplate some form of *developed* heathenism. These all address themselves to parties in whom original or birth-sin has grown into actual and matured wickedness. Such specimens of full-grown depravity are to be found in the dens of London; in the gross ignorance and brutality which prevail in some country districts; and among the millions of pagans abroad, who worship gods of their own making, and fight and devour one another. These people had not in early life the privilege of access to an evangelical Sunday-school. No man cared for their souls. Religiously, they were neglected, and left to go on in the frowardness of their own heart. This course of things was continued until they became tied and bound with the chain of their sins, led captive by the devil at his will, and deeply sunk in blindness of mind and hardness of heart. Yet God willeth not the death of any of these adult sinners. He willeth them to turn from their wickedness, and live. Jesus is the Friend of "harlots, and publicans, and thieves." He commands all His servants to seek and to save that which is lost. Hence Christian people have always acted on the Missionary Principle. God has blessed their labours; and many have been turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.

The use of both these Principles is enjoined by

Divine authority. Jesus said to His Apostles, "Go ye out into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." He also said to the same Apostles, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not." He said to Peter, "Feed My sheep," and also said "Feed My lambs." Paul said, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season;" he also directed that children should be brought up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." It was therefore plainly by Divine authority that these two instruments were appointed for subduing the world to Christ. Not only was this two-fold process to be begun, but it was to go on until the end contemplated had been actually attained. Adult sinners are to hear the Gospel, and children are to be made acquainted with its truths, until the knowledge of the Lord covers the face of the earth. Dying sinners are to be pointed to Christ, who cures the most desperate cases; and little children are to be referred to Him, that the further progress of their moral disease may be prevented; and this is to be continued until the world is restored to spiritual health. Sheep who have gone off into the wilderness are to be sought and fetched home; lambs who have not yet gone far from the flock are to be brought back to it again; until the world becomes one fold under one Shepherd, happy in His presence, and secure under His protection. If missionaries can both preach the Gospel to savages, and at the same time teach them to build houses and cultivate the land, well and good: but if not, they must, at least, "preach the Gospel to every creature." When the church is able to give to her children both an evangelical and a secular training, she is bound to do it. Both are desirable; but one is indispensable. In every town, in every village, in every hamlet to which she has access, the children must hear of Christ, be led to Him, and be brought up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

As these two Principles are equally enjoined by Divine authority, so their employment is equally important and necessary. The Missionary Principle is a beginning, and the Sunday-school Principle is a continuation ; and these are both necessary in order to the accomplishment of any work. Without them no kingdom can be first conquered and then retained in permanent subjection. An invading army may fight a great battle, and gain an important victory, and so far subdue a people ; but unless they are afterwards wisely governed, they will become dissatisfied, and throw off the power to which they had once submitted. A nation may be subjected to Christ by the operation of Christian missions ; but unless the children are afterwards instructed, and prevailed upon to submit themselves to Him, that people will never be thoroughly and permanently under His rule and government. Missionaries are like skilful physicians, when they enter a country afflicted with pestilence, and are enabled, by God's blessing, to cure the sick and the dying. The Sunday-school Principle operates like those sanitary measures which are subsequently adopted. It is commonly said that "prevention is better than cure." All will admit that the one is as necessary as the other in restoring and perpetuating the health of the community.

Missionary preaching has often been blessed to the commencement of a revival of religion. By the operation of the Sunday-school Principle fuel is brought to the fire, and it is kept burning from generation to generation. When the Gospel is first preached to a heathen people, it affects them like a new discovery. The Athenians said to Paul, "Thou bringest certain strange things to our ears." Greenlanders said to the Moravian missionaries, "Why did you not tell us these things sooner?" Each man for the first time heard in his own tongue "the wonderful works of God," and was beyond measure astonished. So it was when such men as Watt and Stephenson first communicated to

their countrymen their wonderful inventions for improving the steam-engine. But then multitudes of boys were apprenticed to learn what these distinguished men had found out, and in this way their discoveries became a benefit to the entire community. It is through the operation of the Sunday-school Principle that these glorious wonders and novelties come to be known to the bulk of mankind, and that succeeding generations are enlightened and saved.

No matter, therefore, what may be a man's peculiar opinions and prejudices, when there is a work to be done he must employ the means by which only it can be accomplished. Christians have the world to subdue to the authority of their adorable Master; and if that is ever to be actually done, they must keep the Missionary Principle and the Sunday-school Principle in vigorous, constant, and harmonious operation.

VI.

THE BLESSINGS OF REDEMPTION MEANT FOR ALL.

The blessings of redemption are equally intended for every member of the human family. Some of them die in infancy, and are generally believed to be eternally saved: others remain in this world, and are suffered to live many years. Dying children are happy in another life only through the atoning death of Christ. Those who are appointed to live are just as dear to their Creator and Redeemer, and are as much under His righteous and gracious government, as are such as have been called to a better and a higher state of being. If the living, here, willingly submit themselves to God, He will be as good to them, according to their present circumstances, as He is to those who are before His throne, and "serve Him day and night in His temple." Whatever be the case with disembodied spirits, dwellers in houses of clay are still left to their own free-will. We know not what He may say to them; but to us He has said, "If ye are willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land." Those who die become holy as the Lord is holy; and if others are permitted to live, the more the treatment of men resembles the treatment of God, the sooner will they be brought to a religious life. As to those who are far from a world of grief and sin, God acts towards them according to His infinite wisdom and goodness; and He has expressly told us how to behave towards those who remain upon earth. The more we take heed to His directions, the better it will be for our children.

VII.

PREVENTION BETTER THAN CURE.

"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost." This was the sad case of all the family of Adam. Christ is the Saviour of the world. He saves sinners of all ages, and in all circumstances. How He deals with men and women, He tells us when it is said, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." How He deals with sinners in the state of childhood, we are told when they brought young children to Him, "that He should touch them." They were received with great kindness, and "He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them." Adults were treated on a principle of *cure*: little children on a principle of *prevention*. Of full-grown offenders it might be affirmed, "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint;" and it was only by the application of a moral remedy that their health could be restored. Children, though naturally depraved, had not yet actually run the same length in transgression; and His aim was to keep them "back from presumptuous sins," and prevail upon them sooner to return unto the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls. In this instance, Jesus "left us an example, that we should follow His steps." As He looked forward, and sought the holiness of these children; so His followers are to treat the rising generation on the same principle, and seek to preserve them from the sins into which they are likely to fall.

Children are to be treated on a principle of prevention, *because it is needless to wait for the actual developement of their hereditary depravity.* We know that the child born but yesterday must, in some form, become worldly and wicked, as certainly as we could know it at the end of a hundred years. The heart of unbelief which was born with them will depart from the living God, if left to itself, as infallibly as the seed grows into a plant or a tree. So it has actually happened in all ages and countries; and so it will assuredly happen in all time to come. If the child, "born in sin," is to grow up a true saint, it must be "born again" of the word of God. It must receive evangelical instruction, and obey the Gospel from the heart. We may employ missionaries at home and abroad, as our Saviour sought and saved the lost; but if we do not endeavour to preserve our own children from the moral ruin into which so many have actually fallen, the truth and sincerity of our zeal may be justly called in question. All waiting is utterly useless, for the final results of original sin are already sufficiently known; and we should begin, at once, and seek to deliver them from "the wrath to come," and prepare them for the glory which is soon to be revealed.

We are further bound to act towards children on a principle of prevention, *by our having already entered upon that course.* They have been baptized in infancy, and thereby dedicated to the Triune God. It may be that we are able to defend this practice, and to prove that infants ought in this manner to be admitted into the evangelical covenant. Still our Baptist brethren are not satisfied; but maintain that baptism ought not to be administered without personal consent, and, at least, a purpose of actual submission to God. It indicates practically, as well as professionally, a devout and holy life. Thus much we must concede to them, that if a promise of submission to Christ does not go before baptism, it should follow as soon as possible.

Infant baptism is essentially an act of prevention ; for it respects not the past, but the future. This ceremony, once performed, should be followed by measures of a more practical kind. Having been dedicated to God (as we think) by His appointment, without their own consent, these children should afterwards be asked—at the proper time— whether they approve of what has been done, and submit to the authority of the God to whom they have been devoted. The Gospel, indeed, calls sinners to repentance ; but tells all, at the same time, that "a prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself;" while none but "the simple pass on, and are punished."

Christians are obliged to treat children on a principle of prevention, *by all the great things which God has already done for the human race.* Had God not manifested His Divine power and grace, all the efforts of the creature had been of little avail. Man cannot lead, but only follow, in the matter of his own salvation : for it is properly and originally by the grace of God that we are saved ; while the faith of the sinner occupies but a secondary and subordinate place. When man transgressed the Divine commandment, and thereby fell into utter destruction, God freely, and of Himself, in His boundless grace and mercy, resolved upon his salvation. The fallen race was redeemed by Christ ; the Gospel, in due time, was preached to the world ; and the Spirit was poured out from on high. It is said indeed to men, "Incline your ear, and hear ;" but unless these great redeeming acts had been previously performed, this hearing had been altogether in vain. In all this much was done by way of prevention. Although the first man had actually sinned, and thereby utterly ruined himself, his children were yet unborn when the great promise of redemption was originally made. Ages before we came into being, a Saviour was provided, and the Gospel was proclaimed. As soon as children come

into the world they are met by a Redeemer, and hear the voice of the Son of God calling them from moral death to life. These facts make it our imperative duty to bring them up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

Children are to be treated on a principle of prevention, *although this often provokes opposition.* The disciples probably thought that creatures so small and young would be troublesome to their Master, and therefore interfered when they were brought to Him. It is now said that children are fickle and changeable, and that no value can be attached to their professions, and but little to their doings. Still, there are some subjects on which their testimony is credible, because it is always the same, and in harmony with that of older people. Whether young or old, all say that the weather is hot in summer and cold in winter. As they come to be convinced that moral obligations cannot be changed, and that nothing is more certain than that God is the moral Governor of the world and the final Judge of men, they will acknowledge, at all periods of life, that it is wise and right to submit themselves to Him. But it is said that whatever people may say or do in childhood, they are sure to act very differently when they become men and women: the same uncertainty is not thought to attach to later conversions; and it is better to seek a revival, when scores and hundreds are born again in a day. But gaining the promise of the young to be the servants of Jesus will not, in the slightest degree, interfere with these things. Revivals will not be the less frequent or extensive, because all consent, in early life, to be the servants of God, and to act according to their promises in baptism. We are bound, therefore, to say to them, while yet young, "Will ye also be His disciples?"

Children should be treated on a principle of prevention, *because of the state to which they are actually admitted, and the glorious prospects opening immediately*

before them. Our Lord affirms that "of such is the kingdom of heaven." They are now taken into the church on earth, and, should they die, would obtain a place in heaven. This is the plan of God concerning them; and unless it be resisted, by some act of their own perverse will, it is fulfilled in all its extent. If such are the circumstances of all children, they should not be suffered to fall into a lower condition. They may indeed become open transgressors, and afterwards obtain mercy; but whenever they begin to wallow in sin, they are fallen from grace, and it may be said of them, as well as of the Jews, "The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers!" We are sorry for the Israelites when, having come to the very borders of the promised land, they refused to go forward, began to murmur and complain, and were therefore turned back, and condemned to wander until their "carcasses fell in the wilderness." If Jesus could truly say concerning little children, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven," then they ought to be treated on a principle of prevention; for it is the easiest thing in the world to suffer them to degenerate; as that is a "wide gate" and a "broad way," "and many there be which go in thereat." Christ, by dying for the human race, has scattered the night of dark despair from the minds of the young, and brought the hope of salvation; and His will is, that their path should be "as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

Children should be treated on a principle of prevention, *though it be found to be troublesome.* Solomon says, "In all labour there is profit." There was profit in what the Saviour did when "He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them." That profit, however, was altogether prospective, and related to their future preservation. There was profit in presenting children to God, and dedicating them to His service, in baptism. That indeed was

but a beginning, and would have been entirely useless had the matter terminated there. But as there must be a beginning in all things, so that was found to be profitable, when followed to its appropriate results. When the harvest is reaped, the labour of ploughing and sowing is found to be profitable. St. Paul exhorts the Corinthians to be "stedfast, unmoveable," because their labour was "not in vain in the Lord;" yet that labour was found to be profitable only on a future day. When it is said that children are to be brought up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," it means that they are to be treated on a principle of prevention, to be kept from falling into deeper ruin, and to be finally presented faultless in the presence of the Divine glory, with exceeding joy. Moses was treated on this principle by his excellent mother; and hence he chose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin." Joshua was treated on this principle; and hence he ultimately said to his countrymen, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Samuel the prophet was devoted to God from his infancy, and resolved himself—as he exhorted his countrymen—to "fear the Lord, and serve Him in truth with all the heart." Elijah was treated on a principle of prevention; and at length said to the Jews, "How long halt ye between two opinions?" John the Baptist was brought up in religious retirement, and so deep and wide was the impression produced by his ministry and holy life, that "there went out to him Jerusalem, and Judea, and all the region round about Jordan; and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins." If you are willing to take trouble with the children under your care, they will be a seed to serve the Lord in days and years to come.

VIII.

INATTENTION TO THE DIVINE DIRECTIONS: ITS REASONS AND RESULTS.

While God has given clear directions respecting children, whom was it His ultimate design to enlighten and to save? All along, He has steadily contemplated the recovery of the fallen posterity of Adam. In every one of His great redeeming acts, He has never lost sight of this. Christ died for all mankind: the bestowment of the Holy Ghost is commensurate with the end of the Redeemer's death. All His evangelical arrangements were made on the same universal scale. The direction that children are to be brought up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" essentially enters into this vast design. Life may pass away, and we may pass out of time into eternity; but if the great purpose of the word of Christ has been disregarded, we are sure to hear of Him again. He sent out a gracious invitation to the great supper He had provided; but as the Gospel was intended to make people holy, and as there were some who did not choose to be holy, His offer of grace became a question of justice; and He said to one of them, "Friend, how camest thou in hither without a wedding garment?" So, if children have been neglected, and His designs of mercy to man are left unfulfilled, we are sure to be questioned on the subject at His bar; "for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ."

But some think that they can improve upon the directions given them by Christ. Accordingly, instead of teaching religion to children, they think it better to

wait until they are men and women. When Saul, the king of Israel, was sent against Amalek, he took the liberty of departing from the instructions he had received ; yet he persisted in maintaining that he had obeyed the commandment of the Lord, and punctually executed the errand on which he had been sent. He was, however, given to understand that those who had received their instructions from God, had nothing to do but to obey them ; and that to alter, under pretence of improving them, could not be allowed, on any account.

Yet there has always been, among the professing servants of God, a perverse inclination to imitate the conduct of Saul, and to alter the Divine commandments. While the more zealous Jews, especially in the later ages of their commonwealth, were ready to "compass sea and land," in order to make one proselyte, they were far from being equally mindful of their own children. Obadiah, indeed, and others, feared the Lord from their youth ; but the Jews, as a nation, came far short of being morally what God intended, when He issued the law respecting "the generation to come." That Christians, too, have been less zealous in the religious training of their own children than in the conversion of adult sinners, is plain from the fact that the church, from age to age, has increased in extent, rather than transmitted her own principles, in all their original purity and power.

But surely, it may be said, the Church of England has pursued another course. She was plainly not ignorant of the command of Christ, baptizes infants, and provides for her perpetuity only by religiously training children. But whoever seriously considers the moral state of England, about the rise of Methodism, will see that she, too, has departed from the path marked out by her adorable Head.

Although Mr. Wesley was awakened to a sense

of religion when but a child at home, and chiefly by the instrumentality of his mother,—and after the gross mistake made by the Church of England,—yet was the attention of Methodism, from the beginning, turned chiefly to adults. It is notorious that the founder of this Society and his early associates went through the length and breadth of the land, preaching mainly to men and women, who had disregarded the engagements of their baptism, and long lived in a course of worldliness and sin.

After Raikes of Gloucester had arisen, and several Methodists had collected multitudes of children into Sunday-schools, God's own plan was more fully carried into effect. But these benevolent people at first thought principally of rescuing poor children from ignorance and vice, and but little of realizing the designs of Christ in their spiritual and everlasting salvation. Sunday-schools are greatly improved, but are not yet thoroughly evangelical institutions. Methodists practise infant-baptism, and in administering it give very good advice; but afterwards make no further inquiry, unless the subject come before them as a candidate for Christian fellowship. This, however, may not be the case; and the infant baptized may be no more seen or heard of until met in another world. When God's commands are obeyed, this anomaly will cease. Children will neither be neglected, nor left altogether to parents and teachers. When they do not rightly decide for themselves, they will be officially asked by ministers, "Will ye also be His disciples?"

As the servants of God, from age to age, have departed from the instructions given them respecting the young, so there are some apparent reasons by which they are misled. One has been the common error of mistaking a part for the whole of that great duty which has been imposed upon us. The church of God has always been endowed with a missionary character,

and has been constituted with reference to adults as well as children. Having laboured for the salvation of men and women, it is scarcely matter of surprise that the young have been overlooked. Another supposition which has led to this, has been a mistake respecting the capacity of children. An adult, it is thought, however wicked, can understand the Gospel; while a child is incapable of that knowledge which is essential to faith and intelligent obedience. The Apostle speaks of a law written upon the heart by the finger of God, by which a heathen, who has never heard the Gospel, yet knows that he sins against God, when he does that which is morally wrong; and the same law is, by a Divine hand, impressed upon the heart of every child. Besides, there may be the root or the seed of religion, although it has not yet grown into a tree. There appears, therefore, no ground for the opinion that a human being, at a very early age, does not possess sufficient information to be religious, and that some time must intervene before he is able to fear God, and work righteousness.

All these, however prevalent, are vain and unfounded opinions. There can be no just and solid reasons for disobeying the commandments of God. The facts are notorious, that we have not followed the instructions given in the Bible in teaching the Gospel to the young, and the world is not yet converted to Christ. His religion has not leavened with its own spirit the nations to whom it has been preached. Nay, we are unable to affirm this even of our own country. We shall not assert that these two things are connected in the way of *cause* and *effect*. That, probably, would not be allowed. But it will not be denied that these things are co-existent; nor that they have probably *some* connexion with each other. Jesus said to His disciples, "Ye are the salt of the earth," and "the lights of the world." True Christians exercise a salutary influence upon other people, only because they

possess the spirit of vital religion. To delay the beginning of their holiness is to lessen their power to benefit the world. Besides, a continuance in sin progressively blinds the understanding, and hardens the heart. If all delay in turning to God has a tendency to produce such effects as these; and if this process be going on, in the case of tens of thousands, from childhood to adult life, how must it increase the moral darkness and obduracy of the world, and perpetuate that general wickedness which is seen to prevail!

It has often been heard with surprise, that young people, after being brought up in a Sunday-school, should run "with the multitude to do evil;" and that, notwithstanding all that God has done, it should still be said, "The whole world lieth in wickedness." But, since children are "born in sin," until they are "born again" no other practical result can reasonably be expected. They come into the world in a state of moral "sleep," and "dead in trespasses and sins;" and until they so "awake" and "arise" as to see that they are under an authority from which it is impossible to escape, they are likely—when commanded—to say unto God, "Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways." Unless the subjects of hereditary depravity receive "a new heart and a right spirit," instead of proving "willing and obedient," they will "refuse and rebel." Either human beings must be regenerated in childhood, or young people and the masses of mankind will live without God in the world. If the scholars in our Sunday-schools are, on leaving them, to run in the way of God's commandments, then they must—during their connexion with these institutions—be brought out of darkness into marvellous light.

It is often said by teachers, "We are unable to make children religious, since we cannot give them a new heart." It is just as true that you cannot give them ordinary morality; for that too is equally the

gift of God through Jesus Christ. Yet you are able to prevail on them to abstain from telling lies, to speak the truth when they have occasion to speak at all, and to keep their hands from picking and stealing. It is said that Sunday-schools have changed the moral aspect of the country; and they have assuredly effected a great improvement. Better instruction has increased morality, and will improve its character, until it becomes not merely "outward in the flesh," but "of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."

IX.

THOUGHTS FOR THOUGHTFUL METHODISTS.

I. *On the main design of Methodism.*—At the very first Conference, held in London, in the year 1744, it was asked what might be the great design of God in the rise of Methodism; and the answer given on that occasion was, "To spread Scriptural holiness over the land." That is, in raising up this peculiar system, such was probably the main design of its great and adorable Author. Methodism, although "the work of God," is essentially friendly to human interests, and readily allies itself with every thing connected with the true welfare of mankind. For instance, it spreads living religion; and by so doing creates a demand for books. By providing them, it has been connected with trade. Its missions to barbarous tribes and nations have, by God's blessing, been rendered successful; and hence its agents have been led to teach civilization and the common arts of life. When statesmen found Methodism useful in attaching remote colonies to the mother-country, at their request it became a political ally. Having by its Sunday-schools succeeded in humanizing multitudes of ignorant and neglected children, it has been led on to forward national education, and become active in the work of general enlightenment and social progress. Still, its chief and primary business always has been, and always ought to be, to bring the souls of sinful men to God, and in that way to "spread Scriptural holiness over the land," and over the world.

II. *On our plans of evangelization.*—It has been stated that there are probably as many unconverted people in England now as when Mr. Wesley began his career. This statement has been made in order to shew the necessity of extending our present system of operations. If it prove that point, to some minds, at least, it also suggests a different idea. A plan of evangelization, which has been at work, with but little interruption, for the last century, and which has neither itself "spread Scriptural holiness over the land," nor provoked others to do it, may possibly need to be modified as well as to be enlarged. It is indeed easy to assume the perfection of our own plans, and to conclude that their extension is all that is needed; but that point may be disputed. To seek to evangelize a country, without giving a proper place to the children, is an undoubted mistake: and it might be wise in us to "review the whole affair."

III. *On our present rate of progress.*—I can think only of children; while others seem to be chiefly careful about adults. We know, from the experience of a hundred years, what all this will lead to. Mr. Wesley preached out of doors, and organized a vast system of aggression upon the world; and yet we are told that there are now as many unconverted people in the country as when he began his career. True, there are more good people; but population has so much increased, that sinners, it seems, are as many as ever. This will never do. We must mend our pace. We must be at the children, or the millennium is a long way off. "They shall all know Me, from the least unto the greatest." This is what God means; and if our plans are not likely, in some reasonable time, to get a decided majority of the population on the side of morality and religion, they are not right. I have told our friends, all along, that children will submit to Christ, and Sunday-

scholars may be trained into good Methodists; but many have not yet faith enough to try.

IV. *On the principle of action to be adopted by Christians.*—In the business of man's personal salvation, the doctrines of grace were never intended to supersede or discourage the efforts of man. On the contrary, these doctrines are urged by St. Paul as furnishing the most powerful motives for personal exertion. He says, "Work out your own salvation," because "it is God that worketh in you." If He work while you work, then you may work with energy and perseverance; for the effort must result in the songs and joys of salvation.

However full and decisive the promises which relate to the latter-day glory, they are not intended to discourage the exercise of skill and energy on the part of the servants of Christ. We must review our plans of operation, and improve them where it is practicable. This is an age of change, and, in the judgment of many, of progress and improvement. Men seem disposed to prove all things, and say they intend to hold fast that which is found to be the best. This principle of action must be adopted by those who are entrusted with the task of evangelizing the world. Unsuccessful plans must be given up; and others adopted, which are found, upon trial, to be more suitable and efficient. All modes of fighting must be dropped, except such as end in victory. A thousand little things must be forgotten, utterly and for ever; and we must become filled with the grand idea of subjugating the world to the Galilean King. We must all feel, as we never yet have felt, that the victory, though promised by God, is made to depend upon ourselves.

V. *On the loss of our Young People.*—It is generally admitted that the majority of young people, on leaving our Sunday and daily schools, pass away—not

into the church—but into the world that "lieth in wickedness." Clearly, it is the design of God that, in the evangelical kingdom, sowing should be followed by harvest; and that "the least of all seeds" should grow into "a tree." It is true that His plans do not interfere with human liberty, and are therefore liable to interruption and failure. That, however, is always owing entirely to the folly and wickedness of man. While much of the cause of this may be found in the children, there is a moral certainty that they are not the only persons to blame. If all parties were acting on right principles, it is obvious that schools must prove nurseries for churches, and scholars rise up to be members of Society. This is indeed the case in many instances; but it is notoriously the exception,—not the rule.

VI. *On the first duty of a Church.*—The Jewish and Christian *Church* was instituted as the means of preventing sin; and *Missions* are the means of curing moral evil. Children were members of the Jewish church; and when the Christian church was instituted, children were admitted into it, and were to be brought up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." All this was done by way of preventing sin. It is true that moral depravity is an hereditary disease. Children bring with them into the world a "root of bitterness." We cannot prevent its existence; but we can prevent its growth and full development. When this had not been done, missions were allowed to cure what it was too late to prevent. At first, Methodism was a self-constituted missionary appendage to the Church of England. It attempted to do what that Church had left undone; and supposed that adults were the parties that required attention. After Mr. Wesley's death, Methodism was made an independent church. It was indeed still a mission, and must continue to do missionary work; but when it became

a church it should have had a work of prevention marked out for it. To make a mission into a church requires something more than a word ; for each has its proper task to perform. No church can turn itself into a mission until it has first done all it can to *prevent* sin.

VII. *On the transmission of true Methodism.*—Missionaries sent into heathen countries are necessitated, for the plainest reasons, first of all to address themselves to adults. But as soon as they have made an evangelical impression upon a few of these, they must, for reasons equally obvious, begin to seek the inward conversion of children. The descendants of converted heathens can never be heathens themselves. The light which has visited their country and brought their fathers to baptism will be sure to convince the children of the senseless absurdity of worshipping gods of wood or stone, the work of their own hands. Unable to become avowed pagans, they are naturally led to a merely nominal Christianity. This is what has happened in all the nations of Christendom. These were at first heathen, and were converted to Christianity. They were visited by holy and self-denying missionaries ; and many of the adults, in consequence of receiving a new heart, "turned from idols to the living God ; and to wait for His Son from heaven." Children were instructed by men, and were able to talk about religion ; but not being taught of God, they never rightly apprehended His character as their moral Governor, failed to be impressed with a sense of His authority and their own responsibility, and therefore never began to fear God and work righteousness.

This was the true cause of the moral degeneracy of England in the early part of the last century. It was this fact which rendered the original rise of Methodism necessary. Methodism itself must either find out the

method of awakening the principle of true, living religion in the hearts of children, or be itself superseded by some other system in due time. The plan of sending children to school, but leaving them unconverted, in the hope that sometime in future life they will be awakened to see the moral authority of God, will, sooner or later, result in general formality, and a people who draw near to God with their lips, while their heart is far from Him. Children now, as adults were formerly, must be "born again," if true Methodism is to be transmitted to posterity, and continued as long as the sun and moon endure.

VIII. *On the great need of the present day.*—Above all, we just now need persons to instruct children who are fully persuaded of their capability of religion. It is the calamity of many children to be consigned to those who but feebly believe either the account of creation furnished by Moses, or that of redemption supplied by the Apostles. Did we once fully admit the Divine origin of human nature, its purchase by the death of Christ, and that children are a part of this humanity, we should labour for their salvation as we never yet have done. We blame the Hindoos for their faith in the radical difference between Brahmins and Pariahs, and the advocates of African slavery for maintaining that black people are an inferior race as compared with the white man; and yet, while Christian churches send the Gospel to all adults by Home or Foreign Missions, and are eager to give children education, comparatively few people even dream of giving them inward and vital religion, having little hope of their receiving the Gospel in its spirit and power.

IX. *On adapting Methodism to the case of children.*—Methodism is an organized effort to save adults who had been baptized in infancy, but whose subsequent

instruction had been neglected or mistaken. Its rules, its Conference, its revivals, its history,—all bear witness to this fact. But it is the most natural thing in the world so to develope Mr. Wesley's plans as to adapt them to the case of children. . . . .

All we contemplate is included in the theory of infant baptism. That theory no church can fulfil without a machinery suited to that purpose. That, however, no church at present possesses. Schools are admirable helps.

IX.

INFANT BAPTISM.

I. THE BEGINNING AND END OF BAPTISM.

INFANT baptism, simply considered in itself, is but a temporary and unfinished transaction. It can never be made permanent without the actual consent of a party who, at the time, cannot even be consulted on the subject. Parents bring an infant for baptism, and the minister receives it, and it becomes a member of the church; but since all this is done while the child itself is incapable of being a consenting party, the arrangement is but for a season, and cannot be considered as binding for life. It is but the setting up of a claim which cannot for the present be conceded. A man may say, "This child is my servant, bound to me by his parents, and after he is of age, I expect him to do my work;" but until he himself agrees to this claim, it just amounts to nothing. Persons may act for a child so long as he is under age, and incapable of acting for himself; but as soon as he attains maturity, he becomes endowed with freedom and independence, and—however obliged in duty—is bound by no engagement which has not received his own personal consent. When, therefore, a baptized child comes to be of sufficient age, no time should be lost before we try to induce him to become a party to all that has been done; and thereby give permanence to his baptism, bring him under all its obligations, and put him in possession of all its advantages.

It is for this reason, among others, that we reject the doctrine of baptismal regeneration. From the New Testament it does not appear that any person is

or can be "born again," in a Scriptural sense, without his own personal consent. It is true that all who die in infancy are finally saved, by virtue of what Christ has done, and of that free gift which has come "upon all men unto justification of life." But this is something very different from what the inspired writers mean when they speak of our being "born again." That is clearly something done for a human being while yet living in this world, and in a state of probation. All the difficulties about the new birth which perplexed the mind of Nicodemus clearly connect that blessing with this world, and the present state of being. St. John says, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God;" but neither he nor any other inspired writer tells us that any person is "born of God" who neither repents nor believes, nor is a consenting party,—nor so much as knows anything of what has taken place. While, therefore, we fully believe that little children dying in infancy are eternally saved, we conclude that such as are permitted to live are not regenerated and born anew, until they individually, and for themselves, repent and believe the Gospel. Baptism begins in sprinkling, and ends in personal consent.

II. Baptism Implies a Question.

St. Peter defines baptism to be, "not the putting away the filth of the flesh; but the answer of a good conscience toward God." Hence, it appears that in the act of baptism there is a question proposed, and an answer made due. As the act is religious, so is the question religious; and the same must the answer be. The question, in essence, is, "Wilt thou submit to Jesus Christ?" The answer must be either "Yes," or "No." It won't do to say in reply, "I am willing to go to school, and there learn a great many good things." You must say whether you are willing to be a *Christian.* The question may be asked when the

child is but an infant, and the answer not be returned until he is a youth: but if he has been baptized, God has asked the question, and the answer should be given. Few young people are so hardened as to say, "I know not the Lord; neither will I obey Him." If they give any answer at all, it will generally be, "I yield, I yield." Our mistake—and the great mistake of Christians in former ages—has been, after God has asked the question, we have not pressed for an *answer*. When the subject is capable of giving his answer, the party who baptized him must look for and receive it. If ministers say they have not time, then they must have "Assistants." It must be done.

III. Duty of Baptizers.

In all cases of baptism there are two parties,—the representatives of the child, and the representatives of Christ; the parties really covenanting with each other. According to the Church of England, there are the parents, and the godfathers and godmothers,—and according to Methodism, there are the parents (to be afterwards assisted by Sunday-school teachers),—who bring the child to be baptized, receive it back again from the minister, and are told to see that it be "virtuously brought up, that it may lead a godly and a Christian life."

On the other hand, there is the minister, the representative of Christ, who baptizes the child in His name, admits it into His flock, and tells its representatives what they are to do. Parents and teachers instruct the child in Christianity, and tell it what Christ requires and expects; but, unfortunately, the minister who has baptized in the name of Christ does not go on to inspect in His name, until the transaction is completed, and the child personally assents to what has been done. This is what ought to be done by all baptizers, either in person or by proxy. It is of little

use asking God to regenerate the child, or telling others to teach the baptized,—and then never inquire any further whether all this teaching has been right or wrong, and whether or not the child consents to be the servant of Christ. . . . It is altogether improper to complain of the inefficiency of Sunday-schools until this has been done.

IV. Baptism Supposes a Capacity for Religion.

Baptism supposes a capacity for religion and morality. It assumes, indeed, that man is a fallen creature ; but it also takes it for granted that he has been redeemed by Christ. Essentially, it is a gracious ordinance, and has been enjoined only because repentance and remission of sins are preached among all nations. As God has given His Son to redeem the world, and His Gospel to enlighten it ; so He has sent His Spirit to open the eyes of our understanding, that we may know the things belonging to our peace. Don't suppose that because children are conceived and "born in sin," they are always to remain in darkness and in death. Baptism itself is a proof that something better awaits them ; and you are encouraged to speak and spare not. In dealing with children you may sow in hope ; for doubtless you shall come again rejoicing, bringing your sheaves with you.

A statesman, whose son is thought to possess superior mental endowments, may have him educated with great care and expense ; and after all, he may not be found to possess the requisite eloquence or sagacity. But there is not the same uncertainty in religion and morals ; and the ends of baptism are sure to be attained when properly and perseveringly sought.

John Wesley's aim was to reclaim apostates from their baptism. We must carry Methodism a step further, and seek the fulfilment of the design of bap-

tism. This assuredly is the *first* thing, as much as, "Seek first the kingdom of God."

Truth gains by discussion; and as infant baptism came from God, and is the first step in the development of His purpose of infinite love to man, the more it is considered, the more will be done by all parties to secure the conversion of children; and the more we do, the more will the Holy Ghost be given, and we shall see greater things yet. Baptism is a *Divine* weapon, and

> "The world must sink beneath the hand
> That arms us for the war."

XI.

A RESOLUTION: ITS ADOPTION RECOMMENDED TO THE FRIENDS OF SABBATH SCHOOLS.

(ADDRESS).

"Believing it possible, by the blessing of Almighty God, to realize the design of infant-baptism, in the conversion of children,—and that this is and ought to be the great end of all Sabbath-school operations; we, the undersigned, are resolved, and recommend all the friends of Sabbath-schools in connection with Wesleyan Methodism, to combine together for the purpose of seeking to accomplish that all-important result."

WHEN this resolution was under consideration in our committee, some of the members thought it would be readily adopted by our friends; but that adoption would be of very little use; since it affirms only what they already believe, and calls upon them to do nothing more than what many have been doing, for years past. Whether our children have been properly cared for or not, they could not see how anything more was likely to be done for them by adopting such a resolution as this. It is possible that some of you, who are present to-night, and have heard the resolution read, may regard it in the same light, and think it unimportant, or even entirely useless.

This notion is partly correct, and partly mistaken. It is correct, inasmuch as the resolution contemplates nothing but what is already right in itself, what our friends have long believed, and have long been in the habit of doing. Its simple design is to make that matter of *compact* and *agreement*, which has long been regarded as matter of duty, and felt as a moral

obligation. I should be very sorry to request our friends to say any thing, or to do any thing, which is not equally true, and equally a duty, whether they adopt this resolution or not. But when it is said that by all this we gain nothing, and that such a resolution is of no use, there is, I think, a slight mistake. By making that the subject of a formal compact, or of a written agreement, each puts himself in the power of the other; each comes to know what the other is doing; and then, in this way, we exert a moral influence upon both foes and friends.

1. For instance, it was always morally right that a man should pay his debts. But then it is a common thing for a debtor to give a promissory note, acknowledging that he owes so much, which he is bound to pay. By that act he puts himself, in some degree, into the power of his creditor. Should he begin to shuffle, and try to evade payment, the creditor can enforce his claims.

So it is right that the design of infant-baptism should be fulfilled, and that these youthful members of the church should be converted and saved. By adopting this resolution, and attesting that fact by signing our names, we put ourselves into the power of each other; so that if any minister, or any Sunday-school teacher, or any parent, should grow weary in well-doing, or in any way begin to neglect his own proper duty towards baptized children, his brethren will be able to call him to account. Ministers can speak to Sunday-school teachers, and teachers to a minister, and either of them to a parent, whenever these are seen to lag behind in this path of duty. Every one of them is amenable to the other members of the caravan with which he chooses to travel; and the command of the Apostle is, "Wherefore lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees." When, by adopting a common resolution like this, Christian people put themselves into the power of

each other, they "warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, and support the weak;" the baptismal engagement is fulfilled; and children are brought up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

2. Another advantage resulting from the adoption of this resolution is to give each of us to know what the other is doing. When a number of sailors have hold of the same rope, each knows by a sign what his fellow is doing; so that they all pull together, and at one and the same time. Hundreds of soldiers, guided by the sound of music, all move with one step. In order that the baptismal engagement may be fulfilled, there are multitudes of ministers, and teachers, and parents, constantly employed. Each of these, like the three companies into which the army of Gideon was divided, acts with more energy and perseverance when he knows that his brethren are at their post, and doing their work; and that the result of their united efforts will be victory and salvation.

3. Another advantage resulting from the adoption of this resolution is to be seen in the influence we shall then put forth upon other people. It is said the hearts of the inhabitants of Canaan melted within them, when they heard of the coming of the Israelites out of Egypt, and knew the common purpose they had formed, and the end they had in view. They had received a commission from God, which they fully intended to execute, namely, to destroy the Canaanites, and take possession of their land. As this was the end they had in view, so they were likely to carry it into effect; for their numbers were considerable, their spirit was resolute, and God was on their side. Now, God is with us, as certainly as He was with them. It is His pleasure that baptized children should be converted; as much as ever it was that the Canaanites should be destroyed. Our Lord refers to the influence which the report of numbers often has upon hostile

armies, when He speaks of a king going out with "ten thousand" soldiers, in order to make war with another, who is coming against him with "twenty thousand." In that case it is not necessary actually to fight,—a mere knowledge of the true state of things is sufficient. He submits at once; and long before the armies meet, he sends out an ambassage, and desires conditions of peace. Away, therefore, with all reserve and concealment. Let us adopt this resolution. Let us avow our purpose and intention. Let it be known that we are seeking to fulfil the designs of the adorable Author of our religion. Let it be known that God is on our side. Should any choose to oppose us,—let it be known that in so doing they are fighting against Him, and are not likely to prevail.

But this avowal of our principles and aims will be likely to encourage our friends, as well as to dishearten our foes. A body of soldiers, hard pressed by an enemy, and almost disposed to submit, will be induced to continue the contest when they hear that a body of friendly troops is coming to their assistance. The men of Jabesh-Gilead resolved to defend their besieged city, and set their enemies at defiance, after Saul had promised them help on the following day. There are many parents, ministers, and Sunday-school teachers, seeking to train up children in the way they should go. They are often cast down, when they consider the levity and perverseness of the young people under their care. But when they hear that a number of persons in another circuit have adopted a resolution, and entered into a solemn engagement with each other, to carry out and fulfil the great design of baptism, their hands will be strengthened, and they will thank God and take courage.

II. It is affirmed in this resolution that baptism

has a great moral and spiritual design, and that design it is possible to realize, by the use of proper means. Circumcision was merely an outward act; but it had a reference to something inward and spiritual. Accordingly God says, "I will circumcise thine heart and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul." Baptism consists in the application of water to the human body, in the name of the Triune Jehovah; yet it contemplates a great moral change in our entire character and condition. Hence the Apostle speaks of our being buried with Christ in baptism, and of our rising with Him to newness of life. According to this resolution, the design of baptism is perfectly practicable, and by the use of proper means children may be truly converted to God, and, by their own consent and choice, become members of His church upon earth.

Now, this is my own opinion, and it is the opinion of many others beside myself; but it is not the opinion of everybody. Some there are who look upon baptism as a mere ceremony, which is just to be administered, and then practically forgotten. To suppose that it will ever lead on to a true inward conversion, and to a voluntary union with the church, is to amuse ourselves with a shadow, and to seek what can never be attained. We wish to know who are, and who are not of this opinion. It is of little importance to ascertain who are the majority, and who the minority. That is the true opinion which is in accordance with the mind of God; and, whether held by many or by few, truth is mighty, and it will prevail.

III. The resolution also speaks of *combination* to carry out the design of baptism; and on that account I should like to see it adopted, signed, and avowed. Immense numbers of children are every year born and

baptized; and without combination we shall do but little in their religious training For many years, parents, and ministers, and Sunday-school teachers, have been seeking to bring up children for Christ and for heaven. In some cases they have succeeded; but in many they have failed. They have been isolated, instead of being combined; and that circumstance is sufficient to account for all that has happened. Neither parents, nor ministers, nor Sunday-school teachers, are able, separately, and of themselves, to prevail upon the young to submit to Christ, and become members of His church. But things which are impossible to divided Christians are easily accomplished when they are united, and become as the heart and the hand of one man. In the days of the Apostles, the church was a formidable power, because her members were united, and acted together in seeking the conversion of the world. Modern Christianity could do but little for the heathen, until its adherents began to combine themselves into great Missionary Societies. But while Christianity is favourable to union, it knows nothing of secret combinations. It is essentially a system of light; and all its movements are made in the face of open day. It has nothing to do with deeds of darkness; and all Christian people are to walk honestly and act publicly, as in the day-time. Let us therefore adopt and sign this resolution; and thereby tell all the world that we are a combination to carry out the design of baptism, and to prevail upon those who were dedicated to Christ in their infancy, afterwards, by an act of their own, to bow to His authority, and to connect themselves with His people.

IV. It is, however, said that our great aim is to benefit the young people committed to our care. Many of our friends are unwilling to adopt and sign the

resolution before us, because they cannot see how such a step is to promote the religion of the scholars in our schools. Yet it is probable that such an open avowal of our purpose would immediately begin to put forth an influence for good upon the thousands of young people connected with Methodism.

In the judgment of many children, a profession of religion would be regarded as unsuited to their age and circumstances. When it is said that such a child has been converted, people talk as if some strange thing had happened. Many a young person is kept back from declaring himself on the Lord's side by a fear of acting in a manner at variance with his age and situation. All these feelings, however, would be banished, were it once clearly and fully understood that there existed a vast combination of persons,—many of them having attained considerable age and experience,—whose avowed object it was to realize the design of infant baptism, and promote conversion to God in very early life.

People seldom enter upon a new course of life without some reference to those with whom they are most intimately connected. When young persons become religious at all, it is generally in considerable numbers. Revivals take place. Companions affect one another; and God overrules all this social intercourse for the accomplishment of His own gracious designs. The more religious children there are, and the more of their companions will be converted; and piety spreads like a fire, which grows in power as it enlarges in extent. The young are always more openly and decidedly religious when they are surrounded with companions like-minded with themselves.

[Concerning the Resolution which is the subject of the foregoing Address, and which he frequently and with great earnestness pressed on the attention of Sunday-school friends, Mr. Jackson observes, in a letter, dated June 4th, 1856:—

"All Wesleyan Sunday-schools should at once declare, by adopting this resolution, that their fundamental principle, and great aim, is to carry out and fulfil the baptismal engagement. This should be done for the credit of the Wesleyan church. The national Establishment has godfathers and godmothers. The principle of this is, that these parties are to take the charge of baptized children, to instruct them, and introduce them to the adult church,—bringing them to the Bishop to be confirmed. This, to be sure, is often a mere form; but Wesleyans, as a church, have nothing."

And in another letter, after expressing a wish for hundreds and thousands of signatures to this resolution, he continues:—

"That is the true foundation, which we ought to have laid some time ago; but 'tis better late than never.' What is a Sunday-school? Just what you please to make it. There are all sorts of things, all called Sunday-schools. *A true Sunday-school is a religious institution, whose business it is to carry out and fulfil the design of baptism.* The sooner we say so, the better. Wesleyan Sunday-schools have never yet been properly recognized by the adult church. Think a moment, and you will see this. Why? Because hitherto they have had no fixed character or Scriptural position. But while baptism is administered, it ought to be carried out to its practical results. Then let all Sunday-schools say, 'That is our principle;' and let those gainsay it who dare."]

XII.

GOD'S METHOD OF CONVERTING CHILDREN.

It may perhaps be asked, What necessity is there for us to do now anything different from what we have been doing already? To this we answer, that, in my judgment, at least, it is necessary to attempt something different from what we have hitherto done, for this reason, among others, that the design of God in giving His Gospel to the world has not yet been fulfilled. The Psalmist speaks of "the generation to come" being led to "set their hope in God," and "keep His commandments." St. Paul says, "They shall all know Me, from the least unto the greatest." If these expressions have not a universal, they have at least a very extensive meaning. Their obvious import is, that wherever the Gospel is allowed "free course," and left to work without obstruction, there, not merely a small minority, but the great bulk and majority of the community would be saved by its power. But this is not actually the case, even in our own country. Out of the millions of our countrymen who might attend public worship if they chose, nearly one half choose to stay away. This is a land of freedom, great power is wielded by a majority of the community, and general questions are decided by public feeling and opinion; yet, at this day, it is a matter warmly disputed, whether we are to have a Christian Sabbath or a continental Sunday; and to be governed by the laws of the Bible or by the spirit of the age. Christianity has indeed done much for England; but it has not yet fulfilled the intentions of

its adorable Author. We must be made, as a nation, a great deal wiser and holier than we now are, before the end is fully attained for which we have been favoured with the glorious Gospel of the blessed God.

This state of things has been brought about very much by the inattention of religious people to the Divine directions. The designs of God have not been fulfilled, because His own people have disregarded His commandments. It was the will of God that the great facts of the Jewish history should be universally made known to that people. They were called to listen to their nation's story; "both low and high, rich and poor together." It was also the will of God that the great facts of Christianity should be made known to all the world. The Apostles were to go and preach the Gospel "to every creature." This wonderful information was to be given to the young as well as to the old. This was to be done by a manifold agency. Parents were to make known the word of God to their children. Ministers of religion were to be the teachers of others. Both Judaism and Christianity recognize volunteers in this service, and tell us that their labours God was pleased to accept. The writer of the thirty-fourth Psalm freely gave himself to this work, when he said, "Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord." St. Paul also clearly recognizes such volunteers in the early Christian church, when he speaks of one who had "brought up children." This was one of a class of pious people, who, for Christ's sake, took poor orphans under their care, and gave them a Christian education. As God intended all these parties to be employed in teaching children, so they were to act together, and to maintain the closest connexion one with another. They are called "fellow-labourers." One may sow, and another may reap; but they are all servants of one Master. They are one body and one soul. They are to work together, and to be blessed together, and to rejoice together.

Now this, we think, among ourselves, has not been done. We have indeed taught the word of God to our children; but we have taught separately, when we ought to have done it unitedly. Why, attempts have been openly made to separate the labourers, by maintaining that only some of them have anything to do with the business. When, for instance, it is said that parents are to teach their children, it has been affirmed that this work belongs to them, and to no other person. But, then, if we put an exclusive sense upon these passages of Scripture, we must, of course, explain others in the same way. It will never do to interpret one passage upon one principle, and another upon a totally opposite principle. If, when parents are commanded to teach their children, we say they are to do it, and nobody else; then, when it is said, "The priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth," we must exclude both parents and volunteers, and say that nobody is to say anything to children about religion but the priest alone. So again, when David says, "Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord," we must say that he meant to exclude both parents and priests, and that people like himself are the only teachers of religion to the young. God, however, directs these labourers to "stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together" to advance the faith of the Gospel. All attempt to separate them is to oppose the plan which He has appointed. If it is true that the designs of God in the moral and religious improvement of our countrymen have not yet been fulfilled, it is equally true that among ourselves, in the work of religiously instructing our youth, there has been far less of hearty union and co-operation than He has required and enjoined.

Again, to anything like such a united system of action there have been a variety of objections. On this head we shall not go into particulars, lest we

should do more harm than good. I may say, however, that never, until these objections were really heard, did I understand our Lord's meaning when He said, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not." At one time, this almost appeared like an unnecessary caution. Why, who will hinder a little child from coming to Christ? Nobody will do this, when the thing is looked at separately and alone. But we must go into matters of practical detail if anything is to be done. *How* are children to be brought to Christ? When it comes to be understood that God proposes to do this by a system of combined action, that several parties are to co-operate, and that the salvation of our young people is to be the result of their united labours,—then objections begin to be heard. Still, it is plain that God's plan is that of *united action*; and all who really mean to fulfil His intentions must combine and work together.

Whenever this has not been done, when any one of these various agencies has been left out, instead of being actively employed, that circumstance is of itself amply sufficient to account for the failures and disappointment which have been experienced. Plants and trees grow and flourish under the combined action of various elements. They are warmed by the sun, watered by the rain, fanned by the air, and fed by the earth. Suppose these vegetables to be so circumstanced as to be deprived of the benefit of any one of these various agencies. If there were no sun to warm, or no rain to water, or no air to fan, or no earth to feed, nobody would be surprised if they began to droop and fade. No thoughtful man would expect to see them lively and flourishing, until they again enjoyed the combined action of the elements which God has ordained for their nourishment and growth. When we see numbers of children, some of whom have no parental religious instruction and control; others no school where they can attend, and there be taught the

lessons of religion; while others hear no sermons,—or none which they can feel and understand,—is it any wonder that such children never come to Christ, and never find salvation in His name?

When God has appointed a work to any of His servants, and that work is left undone, the consequences of that sinful neglect are often felt even by innocent parties. Our Lord speaks of His ascension to heaven under the notion of a man going into a far country, and who before his departure ordered the affairs of his household for the comfort and well-being of those who were to be left behind. To some of his servants he gave "authority," "to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch." While some of these parties did the work assigned them, others, it appeared, neglected theirs, and moreover began "to eat and drink with the drunken." The consequence was, that many members of the family were greatly injured; and when the master returned, he found his household in a condition very different from what he had reason to expect, considering the arrangements he had made. Christ has ordained that children be brought up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." This is to be done by a combined operation; many of His servants are directed to take their proper share in this "labour of love." Some of them, however, very respectfully decline having anything to do with it: and the result is, many children are neglected, and grow up ignorant and godless, from one age to another. United efforts in this work would, by the grace and blessing of God, result in very many early conversions, and in a greatly improved state of morals and religion in our own country.

You have seen children taught the word of God, for years together; and have observed thousands of them, notwithstanding, remain thoughtless and worldly-minded. With these facts before you, it may seem unlikely that mere combination should produce a

different result. Suppose parents, and teachers, and ministers, all to unite heartily in making known the Gospel to the young, you cannot see how this should end in their conversion and salvation. Perhaps you never will, until the attempt has been actually made. God often leads the blind by a way that they know not; and, provided they will but walk in the path He has pointed out, He will, as they go on, "make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight," and will never forsake them. Abraham obeyed God when he walked in darkness, and had no light. He went out of Chaldea, not knowing whither he went; yet he found God faithful to all His engagements. He is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." If you will but treat your children as He has directed, He will put His laws in their mind, and write them in their hearts, and they shall all know Him, "from the least unto the greatest." . . .

Our Lord, a little before His crucifixion, prayed to His Father, respecting His people, "That they all may be made perfect in one;" and then adds, as the reason and end of this request, "that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me." Whatever else this expression may mean, it refers to their being "one" in their bearing upon the world which lieth in wickedness. As if of one heart and one soul, the rays of their influence should so mingle as to be but one powerful recommendation of Christ; till the world regard Him as the Son of God and the Saviour of men. Whenever the concentrated influence of all the followers of Christ is made to bear upon the rising generation, the world will become rapidly Christian.

Isolation hindered the finishing of the tower of Babel: Combination reared the temple of Solomon. God confounded the language of the people on the plain of

Shinar. As they could no longer understand one another, they could no longer act together; so they desisted from their work; and this wonderful tower, so vigorously begun, was never completed. Solomon had thousands of men in the mountains, felling trees and hewing stones. Others conveyed these materials by sea and by land to Jerusalem. Thousands more were employed in putting every stone and timber into the place for which it had been prepared. All these agents acted together. Their innumerable efforts tended to one result; and in due time the structure was completed, and remained, for ages, a noble monument of combined skill and power. When these two principles of action are applied to the evangelization of children, whoever examines their respective tendencies and results will find the contrast equally marked and striking. Isolation will always be attended by comparative feebleness and failure. Combination will always act with energy, and generally result in success.

"O let us all join hand in hand,
Who seek redemption in His blood,
Fast in one mind and spirit stand,
And build the temple of our God!"

XIII.

A SUGGESTION.

Surely it is proper that every Sunday-school Committee and every Teachers' Meeting should take and thoroughly consider this question :—What can be done in order that a larger number of our pupils may pass from the school to the adult Wesleyan Church? Let every Leader's Meeting discuss the same question. We have known these Boards spend much time on subjects of incomparably less importance.

Lords and Commons, in Parliament assembled, differing on the details of a pending Bill, have appointed a Conference, which has generally resulted in agreement. Two counties, separated by a river, have deputed their respective authorities to meet and consult about the erection of a bridge, by which travellers might pass from the one to the other. Let the authorities of the schools and of the adult church meet in the same manner, and concert a series of rational measures which, like a strong bridge, and a wide, open, and secure road, shall conduct our youth, with something like an unfailing certainty, from the state of Sunday-scholars to that of instructed and holy communicants.

Part Second.

THE "Rules of Society" mention "a desire to flee from the wrath to come." Does not this desire follow a previous knowledge of God? Should not such as have to do with children seek, first of all, and while they are very young, to impress them with a conviction that God is now their moral Governor, and "the Judge of all the earth;" that "He is angry with the wicked every day;" and that from His authority we cannot escape? Human beings are born without this feeling. In the minds of open sinners it is not present. To receive this impression is to be "awakened," and is the beginning of conversion.

I.

THE GOSPEL.*

"BLESSED be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you."—1 PET. i. 3, 4.

THESE words of an inspired Apostle involve the statement of a wonderful and gracious fact. The parties here addressed were Jews by birth and education, and had been subject to all the moral and spiritual disadvantages of their age and nation; but they had heard the Gospel, and felt its power on their hearts, and were now living in possession of "a lively hope" of a state of the most pure and exalted blessedness after death. What had been done for them was in itself a work so extraordinary, and there had been towards them such a manifestation of grace, that the Apostle saw they were laid under the greatest obligations to God. We live in another country, and in a later age, and differ from them in a great variety of circumstances; yet their case deserves our very serious consideration. We

* In the preceding pages, attention has been directed to several arguments in support of the principle, that when a church "thoroughly sympathizes with Christ, and simply aims to fulfil His intentions," "her chosen and primary rule of action will be, conversion in connection with childhood and the morning of life." That this is perfectly practicable, on a large scale, "if the conscience of a child can, as well as that of a man, discern the difference between right and wrong, and if the will of a child, through the conscience, can be brought to choose the one and refuse the other;" and how to begin and proceed in this work; are points next brought under consideration. Those of our readers, especially, who are striving to make a deep and abiding religious impression on the youthful mind, will derive instruction and encouragement from a careful study of the following papers. "All people must submit to Christ; and they might as well do it at first as at last. If we can get them to do it, we shall revolutionize the world."

propose, therefore, to make the words before us the subject of a few observations, relating more especially to ourselves.

I. We observe, that the Gospel *works out its great design by the impressions it makes on the human mind.* The persons here addressed had heard many sermons, and knew many things of which they were previously ignorant; but, beside all this, a very deep *impression* had been made on their minds. They had felt their guilt and danger as sinners, had seen the all-sufficiency of Christ, had fled to Him for refuge, and had been justified by faith, before they could "rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Religiously-disposed children in our schools have not merely been taught many important lessons, and received much valuable instruction, but what they have heard has reached their consciences and affected their hearts. Many persons attend our chapels for years, and yet appear to obtain no benefit, because the sermons make no impression upon them, as they have become hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

Although religion consists in feeling rather than in idea, yet, as impression is produced by teaching, it is sometimes called "the knowledge of God." All the great facts included in the Jewish history are calculated to create feeling, as well as to give information, —and to make us fear God, while we read of His wonderful works. The various facts recorded in the New Testament, and which are the foundation of the Christian religion, are intended to impress us in the same way. When we read that "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son" for its redemption, we *feel* while we are enlightened; and say, in conclusion, "We love Him, because He first loved us." To have a great deal of knowledge, and very little *feeling*, is to be in a very unsatisfactory condition. Many there are,

who know a great deal about the Bible; but as they neither love God nor fear Him, nor keep His commandments, they are likely to perish in their sins. Those who, like the three thousand on the day of Pentecost, have heard about Christ until they are deeply affected, are likely to obtain the forgiveness of sin, and to be filled with the Holy Ghost.

Perhaps it will be said, in the way of objection, that man may indeed be the teacher of his fellow-men, but he is unable to impress them: a preacher may make them hear, but to make them feel is the work of the Holy Ghost. Now, all this is very true; and it is equally true that this is a matter with which we have nothing to do. We are to mind our own work, and God will not be negligent of His. If men do but preach the Gospel and hear it, according to the best of their knowledge and ability, it will be found equally mighty to instruct and to impress; for it is "a fire," and "a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces." At present, a great deal is said respecting the advantages of learning and intellectual attainments. Many run to and fro, and knowledge is increased. But let it never be forgotten, that the Gospel of Jesus works out its great design, not merely by the knowledge it imparts, but by the *impression* it makes upon the hearts of men.

II. I remark, that the Gospel *is adapted to the actual circumstances of the human race.* Christianity is God's message to the descendants of Adam. Its character and design are represented by an angel flying "in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people." We all know that the human race includes the old and the young, aged people and little children,—some who rise up early, late take their rest, and eat the bread of carefulness,—and others who are going to school, and

preparing for what is before them. While the Gospel impresses the heart, there is a difference in the form of that impression, according to the varied circumstances of those who receive it. Christianity impresses children in one way, and adults in another. What Christians feel, after having heard the Gospel, is sometimes called the "fear" of God, at other times the "love" of God, and in the text it is termed "a lively hope." These expressions do not denote several things, but one great religious principle in different stages of progress. That which in a child is the fear of God, in after-life ripens into the love of God, and finally matures into "a lively hope" of heaven after death. All proceeds from an impression made upon the heart by the glorious Gospel of the blessed God.

If to love the Lord with all our heart, and to rejoice in hope of His glory, is the religion of a man or a woman, even a child can possess the same principle in a lower form, by having the "fear of God" before his eyes. It is commonly believed and held by Christian people that "all men are conceived and born in sin." So long as they remain in the moral state in which they enter the world, it is said, expressly, by St. Paul, that "there is no fear of God before their eyes." They may have been baptized; they may go to heaven if they die; but, if they live, they are strangers to the "fear of God," until they have been instructed by the Gospel, and it has made an impression upon their hearts. This want of feeling, or this absence of fear, is a grand moral defect. This is the cause of all wrong-doing. All the world over, people are doing wrong because they are not restrained by the fear of God. Although children are born with this sad moral defect, they know not the loss they have sustained by the fall. Their case affectingly appeals to the compassion of all who are older than themselves. It entreats you to tell them about God, until the Gospel has made a deep impression on their hearts.

If they hear, and fear, they will do no more wickedly. They will think of their past sins, feel a desire to flee from "the wrath to come," and inquire, "What must I do to be saved?" In the end, it is very likely this impression will grow into pardon and peace through believing. Fear will ripen into love, and into a lively hope of heaven.

As the Gospel is intended for all, so it is adapted to the case of every individual soul. Hoary sinners upon a death-bed may seek and find mercy, and be as brands "plucked out of the fire." A prodigal son who has spent years in the far country, if he say to himself, "I will arise, and go to my Father," may be a sinner saved by grace. A child at school may have his heart impressed; may behold the Lamb of God; and at length have reason to say, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again to a lively hope" "of an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

III. The Gospel makes an impression upon the heart of man, but *offers no violence to human nature, as constituted by its adorable Creator.* Man has been endowed with freedom of will, and is entrusted with the awful power to choose the good, and refuse the evil. Christianity never interferes with this freedom, but leaves the sinner to decide his own case. Jesus says, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock." He proceeds no further; but waits there, until we open the door, and admit Him in. There are many adults of whom the Saviour still has reason to say, "I called, and ye refused; I stretched out My hand, and no man regarded. . . . How often would I have gathered you, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!" The people addressed in the text had, each and all of them, *consented* to be saved. When the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ

offered to shew them "His abundant mercy," they individually replied,—"Behold the servant, behold the handmaid, of the Lord; let it be done unto me according to Thy word." Not one was compelled to be a Christian. All of them were a willing people, and had chosen life that they might live.

How many children would have consented to follow Christ in the same way, it is impossible to ascertain; as all are in a state of subjection, and many are seldom or never so much as asked on the subject. It is quite possible that even a refusal, a hesitation, or a partial consent, might have ripened into a fixed purpose, and a settled determination to cleave unto the Lord. But as nothing was said to them on the subject, until the time had gone by, they are still halting between two opinions. It is in human nature for young people to wait to be taken by the hand, and directed what to do. Many would have gone to a class-meeting, had they been invited; and might have been led to Christ, and to a "lively hope" of heaven. That, however, was not done; and they continue to float along with the stream of events, to follow the devices of their own hearts, or to go with a multitude to do evil. Yet every child has a free-will of his own. None, however small, can be made Christians without their own consent. They may receive the very best instructions, and in all respects be treated in the most admirable way; but unless some person will be at the trouble of persuading them to be reconciled to God, their goodness will prove as "the morning cloud." Prophecy, however, points to a time when all classes shall more generally consent to be religious. Adults in our congregations, and young people in our schools, will, in larger numbers, voluntarily become the soldiers and servants of Christ; and in consequence of this surrender, will be enabled to rejoice in a "lively hope" of "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

IV. The Gospel *fulfils the great designs of God.* In order to this, however, it requires to be carried out in all its parts, and brought to bear upon the young as well as upon the old. We can understand Christianity only by considering the designs of its great and adorable Author. When He sent His Son into the world, it was His purpose to people heaven with souls redeemed from among men. He intended, by that arrangement, to "bring many sons unto glory." In order to this, it is enough that mercy be obtained at any period of life. A sinner may obtain forgiveness when he is old, or sick and about to die. Being saved by grace through faith, his disembodied spirit may unite with the glorified throng in singing, "Unto Him that hath loved us, and hath washed us from our sins in His own blood, be glory and dominion for ever." But to people heaven with sanctified human souls was but a *part* of the great design of God. He meant to render this a holy world. His purpose was, that this earth should be inhabited by a moral and religious people. "The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together." Morality and religion among men are to be brightened into the purity and splendour of heaven itself. In a moral sense, there is to be "a new earth;" and the former things are to be done away. "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, saith the Lord; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." When the hearts of men have been softened and moulded by the power of the Gospel, "they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

But if ever these prophecies are to be fulfilled, and if such a state is ever to prevail among men, that great moral defect with which children are born must be supplied *in early life*, and they must be brought to

fear the Lord from their youth. There will always be a correspondence, in any community, between the moral character of adults, and the training of children. Men and women are likely to neglect public worship, and to live in the practice of open sin, when children are brought up, not having the "fear of God" before their eyes. There are sure to be political quarrels where there are irreligious schools and families. Nation will continue to "lift up sword against nation," until the Gospel has laid the axe to the root of all this mischief by teaching children to "fear God, and keep His commandments." But Christianity is sure to fulfil the entire design of God, if it is but made known to the young and to the old, according to the intentions of its adorable Author. It will fill heaven with saints who once were sinners, and purify the world in which we live; when it has taught both children and adults, first of all, to fear God and seek His mercy, and then ripened this feeling into the higher principles of evangelical love and living hope.

V. The Gospel *is meant to counteract the effects of sin.* Christianity assumes the fall of man, and seeks to turn into a blessing the curse which he has brought upon himself. We all know that sin is in the world, and that "it is appointed unto men once to die." St. Paul tells us that "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin." One generation passeth, and another cometh in its place; because "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Man therefore knows that he must die; but the Gospel opens before him the prospect of a better world. He knows that worms shall destroy this body; but Christianity tells him that his Redeemer liveth, and that after death he shall be with Him and "see Him as He is." Christ has died for our sins, and risen again for our justification; and when we are justified by faith, we "rejoice in hope of the glory of God." This hope alters

the character of death,—makes he grave the door of everlasting life,—turns the curse into a blessing, and our punishment into an advantage.

Well may we exclaim, after the Gospel has saved us from sin, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!" Every man has an intelligent and immortal mind, and therefore longs for something more substantial and durable than this world can afford. A man's portion of earthly good may be so great as to render him an object of envy to his fellow-men; but as a guilty and dying creature, he is constrained to say, respecting these advantages, "All is vanity, and vexation of spirit." His inheritance on earth is essentially corruptible. There is a worm at the root, which is sure to kill this blooming flower. Canker and rust are eating this wealth. A frost has set in, which will lay all his blushing honours in the dust. Our inheritance on earth, too, is fading away. Man, like a child, has no sooner got a new toy than he wishes to exchange it for another. This world is like a bubble, which glitters in the sun, and exhibits all the colours of the rainbow; but no sooner do we grasp it than it vanishes, and we lose it for ever.

Our earthly inheritance is corruptible and fadeth away, because it is defiled by sin. But there is a power in the Gospel to save us from sin, and all its consequences. We are obliged, indeed, to leave a world which cannot satisfy our minds, because it is corruptible, fading, and defiled; but the Gospel holds out the promise of something more substantial and enduring. God said to His tempted and offending creature, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return;" and many people, all their life long, through fear of death, are "subject to bondage." But no sooner do we hear the Gospel, and feel its power on our hearts, than our prospect brightens, and the sun begins to shine. To a true believer, "to die is gain;" and however eligible

may have been his condition in this world, "to depart, and to be with Christ" is "far better."

VI. The Gospel *assumes the utter unworthiness of man, and proposes to save him only by grace.* No moral worth is attributed to the parties here contemplated by the Apostle. Their salvation is ascribed entirely to the grace of God operating through Jesus Christ. The thought of what had been done for them awakened no feeling of glorying in themselves, but simply that of unbounded gratitude to another. The words of our text are full of encouragement, and can hardly fail to awaken hope concerning ourselves. Some of us are young, and others are old; and some are still in the midst of their days. All appear utterly destitute of moral worth, and can see nothing in our own character on which to found a hope of salvation. Young people and mere children are but just beginning to act; and as yet have done nothing which can deserve the favour of God. Many who desire salvation say to God,—

> "It cannot be bought, and Thou know'st I have nought,
> Not an action, a word, or a truly good thought."

Aged professors of religion, although they have never wilfully departed from God, yet have failed in their duty in so many instances, that they can only say, "God be merciful to me a sinner." But the Apostle here speaks of great blessings having been bestowed upon a principle which fully meets the case of an unworthy people. All that God had done for these persons flowed from His "abundant mercy;" and by that alone had He been prompted in it all. Let sinners of all sorts and degrees hope in the Lord, and hope to the end.

II.

ON THE DIVINE AUTHORITY.

We are all aware that there is such a thing as moral obligation. This, in truth, is a matter of personal consciousness. Although there should be no witnesses of the fact, and the other party should be ever so helpless and unable to enforce his rights, yet we feel *bound* to keep our word. Were we to refuse to perform a promise we had made, we should feel we had done wrong, and should be censured and condemned by our own consciences. The same principle connects itself with every part of morality. When we make any statement to another, we feel bound to tell him the truth, and know that a lie is altogether wrong. We feel, too, that it is equally wrong to take the property of another. Our neighbour may be rich, and we may be poor; and there may appear a thousand reasons why we should take that which belongs to him, without his knowledge or consent: but these are all mere palliatives and excuses. Not only the Bible, but every man's conscience, says to him, "Thou shalt not steal."

This moral obligation, of which every human being is conscious, flows from the authority of God. It is not so much the result of any thing that He has said; but proceeds from His essence, and the relationship existing between Him and ourselves. "It is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves;" and as soon as we came into being, we fell under His authority, and began to feel that we were not our own masters.

By a covenant between the Persons in the Godhead, the authority of the Father over men has been transferred to the Lord Jesus Christ. This has been done in consequence of the redeeming acts of the Saviour. He gave Himself "a ransom for all," and is therefore made the "Lord of all." It was said of Nebuchadnezzar, "Whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive." So Christ has the absolute power of life and death, of heaven and hell. He is exalted "a Prince and a Saviour," to give repentance and remission of sins. If the Son shall make us free, we shall be "free indeed," in the highest and best sense of the word. "To as many as received Him, to them gave He power," or right, or privilege, "to become the sons of God." "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son;" and at His command the wicked will go away "into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal."

The authority of God over man is *unlimited in its extent.* It reaches to every individual member of the human race. God is addressed in His word as "the Judge of all the earth;" and we are told that "every one of us" shall give an account of himself unto Him. He has declared, with an oath, that His authority shall be ultimately acknowledged by every human being. That authority reaches to every part of the conduct of every child of Adam, whether known or unknown to their fellow-men. It is said that God will bring "every work" into judgment, and that for "every idle word" we shall give account in that day. Some of our actions and words are known to other people, and determine their opinion respecting us. Others are not known at all; and hence that opinion is often a mistaken one. But *all* our doings and sayings are known unto God; His sentence is based on our entire proceedings; and hence His judgment is always according to truth and fact. There are some parts of

our character which men cannot possibly know, as our thoughts and impressions ; but all these are subject to the authority of God. Hence it is said, He will "judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ," and will "bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the heart." All will acquiesce in the rectitude of His decisions, and say, "Just and true are Thy ways, thou King of saints."

The Divine authority is *perpetual in its duration.* In the present state of being, men are never at one stay, but fluctuate like the waves of the sea. Many change from poverty to riches : and all from youth to age, and from health and vigour to sickness and infirmity. In the earlier ages of the world, when men lived several hundred years, these changes were still more marked and numerous. But with the Divine authority there is "no variableness, neither shadow of turning." There is yet another revolution in our circumstances, which is eminently and emphatically our "change." Death is a great as well as a solemn change ; for it involves a removal from earth to the world of separate spirits, an end to our probationary state, and the receiving of the rewards due to the deeds done in the body. But there is no escape from the authority of God ; for it is exercised, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. "After death" there is "the judgment ;" and the endless duration of the joys of heaven and the pains of hell proves the continuance of the Divine authority. "The Lord sitteth King for ever ;" and through eternity, God shall be "all in all."

The Divine authority is *irresistible in its exercise.* This is exemplified in the history of Pharaoh. He profanely asked, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice ? " and declared, "I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go." But he found the authority of God to be irresistible ; for he was first humbled by successive plagues, and finally drowned in

the Red sea. Men have sometimes combined in order to resist God's authority, and set aside His decisions against the violaters of His laws. But, "though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished." The power of God no creature is able to resist. "The kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men," can combine and defeat a power that is inferior to their own; but when God chooses to exercise His authority, they can only say "to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" Very likely the man found without a wedding garment was unwilling to leave the company; but, at the word of the king, he was bound hand and foot, and taken away. Notwithstanding the reluctance of the man clothed in purple and fine linen, and who "fared sumptuously every day," he "died, and was buried; and in hell he lift up his eyes."

These are cases of judgment; and did we look only at them, we might be in some danger of supposing that the authority of God was at variance with the security and happiness of man. Yet those who willingly bow to that authority know that they are the safest and the happiest; for while submitting to His rule they enjoy His protection. Hezekiah, when sick unto death, said, "I beseech Thee, O Lord, remember now how I have walked before Thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in Thy sight." He had submitted to God while occupying his throne, and had not dared to oppose His will. Now, in his affliction, he "prayed and wept sore;" and God proved, not only that He was a great King, who ought to be obeyed, but that He was almighty to save. Not only did He raise Hezekiah from the bed of death, and add unto his life fifteen

years; but when his flesh and his heart finally failed, God was the strength of his heart, and his portion for ever: and even after he had passed into the world of spirits, he found himself in His presence, where there is "fulness of joy." "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord;" for they still enjoy His protection, and are happy in His smile.

There are others in the world now, who, as matter of choice, practically acknowledge the Divine authority, and submit themselves unto God. This temper, in the first place, puts them upon inquiry concerning His will. Saul of Tarsus began his Christian career by saying, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" and in the same spirit every child of Adam begins to be a disciple of Christ. The Jewish church said, "Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters,"—so we wait and watch the intimations of Thy will, and stand ready to move at Thy bidding. Sinners, on the other hand, are utterly regardless of God, and their sole concern is to follow the devices and desires of their own hearts. It is said that when the people of Israel made peace with the Gibeonites, they "asked not counsel of the Lord;" deeming themselves quite competent to conduct the negociation without Him. But they were outwitted, and committed a great mistake. So there are many persons at present who go hither and thither, and engage in many undertakings, without ever stopping to ask counsel of the Lord. But though such a one may deem himself a wise man, in the end he will be plainly told that he is a "fool;" for all his contrivances have led only to the destruction of his soul. Say, therefore, at once, unto God, "Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel;" being assured that if suffered to lead you on earth, He will afterwards receive you to glory in the world to come.

It is an apprehension of the moral authority of God which plunges men into the sorrows of repentance, and

leads them to prayer for the pardon of their sins. People who know they have done wrong, and yet have no blushes on their cheek, nor any remorse in their soul, either do not believe in God, or have lost sight of His authority over them. When Peter had denied his Master, "he went out, and wept bitterly;" because he felt he had committed a great sin, and fully expected to be called to an account. As soon as ever the inhabitants of Nineveh were made aware of their true condition, by the preaching of Jonah, they proclaimed a fast, and turned every one from his evil way, and cried mightily to God for mercy and forgiveness. They saw God's authority over them, they knew that they had provoked His wrath, and they were greatly afraid. After the woman who had been a sinner had obtained forgiveness from Christ, she felt she had escaped from so great a danger, that her joy and thankfulness seemed to know no bounds. All the wrongs and disorders in the world result from men resisting the authority of God, and doing their own will in opposition to His. The day of judgment is God's final interference for the purpose of putting down all authority opposed to His own, and introducing a reign of universal rectitude and peace. To a voluntary submission to God you are all at present invited by the Gospel. Do not say, "There is no God," or, "He has nothing to do with me." Be assured that He is your Judge; and that, in the end, "every one of us shall give account of himself to God."

This is one of the most simple forms of personal religion; it is suited to every adult and to every child. There are so many disputes about religion,—one says it is one thing, and another says it is another, till a child is confounded, and scarcely knows what to do. But all the children in the Sunday-school are aware of God's authority over all creatures. Conscience tells them that they must give an account of themselves unto Him. He has appointed Christ to be our Judge

because He is our Saviour. Go, therefore, to Him, and ask Him to forgive all your past sin, and to give you a heart to love Him, and diligently to live after His commandments. This may not be all you need; but it will be the beginning of good days. It will be passing the strait gate, and entering the narrow way. The grain of mustard seed will then be sown; and though it be the least of all seeds, it will, in due time, become a tree. This is laying the foundation on a rock; and though the floods may rise, and the winds blow, that house will stand, and stand for ever.

III.

ON CONSCIENCE.

As conscience is already in children, if it can—when appealed to—lead on to conversion, then the day is ours.

I. EVERY human being has a conscience. This has been called God's vicegerent in man. It forms a judgment of the moral character of our inward and outward actions. Some divines and philosophers, indeed, have called this, "natural conscience," have a great deal to say about its mistakes and defects, and affect to attach little importance to its decisions. But whatever may be the deficiencies of this awful and mysterious power, there it is. No man can be ignorant of its existence. It is impossible to explain it away. We have all felt its operations. It belongs to our very nature and being. Man has become a sinner. Morally speaking, he is altogether "as an unclean thing." His heart is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." But conscience is still living and acting within him, and is always telling him that it is wrong to rebel against God, and right to submit to His authority.

II. St. Paul says, in his second Epistle to the Corinthians,—respecting himself and the other Apostles,—We are constantly "commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." This is the uniform aim of the Gospel of Christ. Whether it be dealing with children or adults, it is always seeking, both by its matter and manner, to commend itself to "every man's conscience in the sight of God." Christianity comes from without, conscience is within; one has to enter through the ear; the other already

dwells in the heart. Both came from God; and they are meant to agree together, "as face answereth to face" in a glass. When this is the case, when conscience says of what is written in the Bible, "This is all true, this came from God, and must therefore be embraced and submitted to,"—then the Gospel finds a suitable reception, and becomes "the power of God unto salvation."

III. Christianity has informed men, better than they formerly were, of the connexion there is between the human conscience and the great God. Every heathen had a conscience, and was accustomed to its operations, in relation both to himself and to other people. St. Paul, referring to the Gentiles, speaks of "their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another." They were constantly passing a moral judgment upon their own actions, and were daily blaming or approving themselves for what they had done. In their thoughts, at least, they as constantly were accusing or else excusing one another. They were always passing a moral judgment upon their neighbours, especially upon public and political men; and bestowed upon them either praise or blame, as they seemed to deserve.

But alas! while thus familiar with the operations of conscience, they were ignorant of the moral Governor of the world. To them He was an "unknown God." They were unacquainted with that great axiom in morality enunciated by St. John when he says, "If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things." The most intimate connexion subsists between conscience and God, although that is greatly inferior to Him. We know many things; but He knows a great many more; and is acquainted with much that is wrong, which has escaped our own observation

Conscience, at the same time, is God's vicegerent. Many of its decisions will be confirmed by Him; and the condemnation which it pronounces will be followed by a death which He alone can inflict. This connexion between the conscience of man and the Judge of all the earth is brought to light by the Gospel. Christianity commends itself to every man's conscience "in the sight of God." By its light we see how far the human conscience is invested with the power and terrors of that Being who "will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing."

IV. It is thought by many that our young people are too giddy and too trifling to attend to the word of God, and to think of submitting themselves unto Him. But every youth and every child among us has a conscience, and surely to its decisions they will pay some attention. Conscience in every human being is the representative of the Judge of all the earth. It is true it does not possess His all-perfect knowledge, nor His unerring infallibility; but on simple subjects it speaks with all the authority of God Himself. Conscience tells us that it is morally right that a creature should respect the authority of his Creator; and that man should submit himself unto God. It is true the devil is very busy, the world is very dazzling, and the heart of man is very deceitful; but surely young people will pay more attention to the decisions of their own conscience, than to the suggestions of any of these, or all of them together. If they listen to the voice of conscience, they will soon be found at the feet of Jesus, asking, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

IV.

RELIGION AND MORALITY.

Religion is morality towards God, and directly leads to all the duties we owe to our fellow-men. There is a power in every human being, denominated *conscience*, by which we can perceive the moral qualities of our own character, and which was planted in our nature by the hand of our adorable Creator. If the Maker of man and the Author of the Bible is one and the same God, the contents of that Book and the decisions of the human conscience will be found to correspond. Conscience, indeed, as a part of human nature, is liable to many accidents, and has its defects; but, since it is God's vicegerent in man, placed there by a Divine hand, it is generally found on the side of truth and right, and is the exact echo of what is revealed from heaven. That is all light which is addressed to the eye; nothing but sound seeks the attention of the ear; and nothing but morality appeals to the conscience. Whatever enforces *duty*, whether relating to God or man, speaks exclusively to this one faculty. Conscience takes cognizance of prayer and of paying debts,—equally approves of serving God and doing justice to man.

Religion and morality are declared to be right by one and the same conscience, because, intrinsically, they are one and the same thing. Religion is a root which produces morality as its stem and branches, and they together form but one tree. From both the Old and the New Testaments it is plain that false religion leads to a false morality, while true piety towards God puts men upon the practice of justice and mercy

towards their fellow-creatures. The great law of heaven, according to the decalogue, is, "I am the Lord thy God; thou shalt have no other gods before Me." This law enjoins the purest morality to man, when it says, "Thou shalt not" even "covet" anything belonging to thy "neighbour." The religion of our blessed Saviour is, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." Whatsoever things are "true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report,"—such a spirit of worship leads us to "think on these things," and do them; and secures the presence of "the God of peace."

Religion and morality are inseparable in the teaching of the Bible, and in the practice of mankind, because they are the work of the same Spirit, are not two things, but essentially one; and only as cause and effect do they differ from each other. These flourish or decay *together*.

V

THE WILL.

At present, I am obliged to acquiesce in the opinion that all religion and morality belong to the human *will ;* that what man has to do is to give his consent, and *choose* to do as God bids him. This does not at all interfere with God's work in saving sinful creatures. We know that He is the great Originator and Author of the entire work of recovering man from his moral ruin. "Salvation is of the Lord." But then no man is ever saved without his own consent. According to John Wesley, if there are times when the grace of God acts irresistibly, there must afterwards be a concurrence of the *will* of the sinner. From this principle I infer :—

1. *That children are capable of religion or morality.* Every creature that has a *will* can do either right or wrong. Various methods are employed by parents and others to direct the wills of very young children, or to check them when they do wrong, and induce them to do right. All the acts of the will come under the cognizance of *conscience ;* and it either ustifies or condemns them. Children can distinguish between duty and sin ; and know pretty well when they are doing the one or the other.

2. I also infer the essential difference between *morality* and *knowledge.* While the former implies choice, the latter involves no choice at all. A man may know all manner of things, without either *choosing* the good or *refusing* the evil.

The work of religiously training children aright lies in a small compass, and is a very simple thing. The *will* is wrong, and needs putting right. The understanding may be enlightened, while the will remains perverse; and people may be good scholars, without being resolved to *do* what they know to be right. *After* the will has made a right choice, the more knowledge the better. There may be strong affections, with a wrong will. People may weep or be joyful, and not *choose* the good or refuse the evil. But a right choice does not interfere with right feelings; and when they have once submitted to Christ, they cannot shed too many tears, or be too full of peace and joy in believing. Whatever may have been the feelings of a youth, and whether he know much or little, he is a redeemed creature, and should be seriously and affectionately asked if he will *submit* to the Lord Jesus Christ. If he answer properly, why should he not be instructed, and know the way of the Lord more perfectly?

The submission of the will to Christ is the proper work of childhood; an adult sinner, converted late in life, is as "one born out of due time."

VI.

MORAL OBLIGATION.

"So let all Thine enemies perish, O Lord: but let them that love Him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might." *Judges* v. 31.

1. THESE words are the concluding part of what is commonly called, "The song of Deborah." This sublime and powerful poem was composed by that holy woman, on occasion of the victory which she, assisted by Barak, obtained over Sisera, captain of the host of Jabin, king of Canaan. In the words of the text, as well as throughout the entire chapter, there is a direct reference to the circumstances connected with that wonderful event.

2. In many books on moral philosophy it has been asked, "Why is a man *obliged* to keep his word?" and some half-dozen different answers have been returned, by so many thoughtful and learned men. This question, together with the various replies it has received, deserves our very serious consideration. It clearly proves that, in the judgment of philosophers, there is such a thing as *moral obligation;* while they are unable to agree as to the answers to be given to many inquiries which may be made respecting it. This question relates only to a particular branch of a great and comprehensive subject. Moral obligation is universal in its extent. Every man is obliged, not merely to keep his word, but in his entire conduct to avoid that which is morally evil, and to cleave to that which is morally good.

3. Inspired writers have come to the aid of men who are merely endowed with reason and addicted to

philosophy. They pour a flood of light on a subject of which the wise and learned appear to know but little. While they assume the truth of moral obligation, they connect it with the Divine government and authority. While they teach that "the Lord's throne is in the heavens, and His kingdom ruleth over all," they affirm that His entire administration is perfectly moral. "The Lord is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works." In these respects He requires His creatures to be like Himself, to love righteousness, and to hate iniquity. It is said of that law which He has given to be the rule of our conduct, "The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." Moral obligation has been imposed upon men by the God in whom "we live, and move, and have our being."

4. While this obligation, as to its substance, remains always the same, as to its mode or form, it has undergone some alteration. At first, men, like angels, were simply obliged to do that which was right,—and which God had commanded. But, since man became a sinner, and has been redeemed by Christ, as he has been placed in different circumstances, he has been treated in a different manner. The Gospel speaks of "repentance," and the "remission of sins;" and enjoins the one, while it promises the other. Man's moral obligation, therefore, remains substantially what it always was; only now, having done the things he ought not to have done, and left undone the things which he ought to have done, he is obliged to repent of his sins, and to seek forgiveness at the hands of God.

5. This obligation is not a dead letter, which we may respect or despise at our pleasure; but a living reality, which will prove to all men glorious or terrible, according to their character. The entire subject of human morality has been delivered into the hands of an unerring Judge, who will infallibly do that which is just and right. Though "the Father judgeth no man,"

yet "He hath committed all judgment unto the Son;" and "we must," therefore, "all appear before the judgment seat of Christ." Not only will the exact truth be then ascertained, but men will be rewarded or punished according to their works. They will then be divided, "as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats;" and the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal. All this appears to be the close and final act of a process which is going on every day and every hour. "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro in the earth, beholding the evil and the good;" and He shews, in a variety of ways, that He "loveth the righteous," but "is angry with the wicked every day." These results are sure to come to pass, sooner or later; for moral laws are as certain in their operation as are the laws of the vegetable world. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." It is to such a state of things that reference is made in the text. "So let all Thine enemies perish, O Lord: but let them that love Him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might."

6. By the persons here described as loving God we are to understand *those who respect their moral obligations, and submit to the Divine authority.* None of them, indeed, can say to his Maker, "Lo, these many years do I serve Thee; neither transgressed I at any time Thy commandment." The best of them are obliged to say, "I have sinned against heaven and in Thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son." But they have humbled themselves beneath the mighty hand of God, and repented as in dust and ashes before Him. Penitent sinners may properly be characterized as those who love God; for repentance is the beginning of love, and soon issues in that love which is the fulfilling of the law. We read of a publican who went up to the temple to pray; but there he durst not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven; but smote upon his breast, saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner." It

is said, "This man went down to his house justified;" and all pardoned sinners can say, "We love Him because He first loved us." David might be properly said to begin to love God when he prayed, "For Thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great." We hear him exclaiming, "I love the Lord, because He hath heard my voice and my supplication." "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits. Who forgiveth all thine iniquities." So long as Saul of Tarsus continued to persecute the Christians, he totally misapprehended the character of God, and utterly mistook the nature of his obligations to Him. When he fell at the feet of Jesus, and submitted to His authority, he began to love God; and was soon led to love Him with all his heart, and his neighbour as himself, and to walk before Him in holiness and righteousness. There are many people now who adopt his principles, and tread in his footsteps; and to these God displays the exceeding riches of His grace, and does for them exceeding abundantly, above all they can ask or think.

7. Of all such it is here said they shall be "as the sun when he goeth forth in his might." This implies that the act of submission on the part of man is to be followed by an act of power and grace on the part of God. The sun rises in the morning, and runs his course through the day, in obedience to the Divine command; for the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth His handiwork. It was God who made the sun to rule by day and the moon by night; and therefore when we see this greater light arise and run his course, we see the power and wisdom of Him who formed this immense globe, put it in motion, guides it in its course, and arrays it in all its glory.

So long as a man is unmindful of the authority of God, is governed only by his own will, and follows the course of the world, so long is he left to his own

resources, and remains blind and dead, "buried in darkness and in sin." As soon as ever he begins to respect his moral obligations, and submits himself to Christ, God undertakes his cause, and begins to display the exceeding greatness of His power and grace. There is a new creation; old things are done away, and all things are become new. The Holy Ghost says to him, "Thy sins be forgiven;" and his sorrow is turned into joy. Saved sinners say not a word of what they have done for themselves; but exclaim, "This is the finger of God." Their grateful acknowledgment is, "The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad." All who are acquainted with the particulars of their case say, "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes." Whenever the Gospel meets with a suitable reception, it comes "in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance;" the glory of the Lord is revealed; and believers become like the sun "when he goeth forth in his might."

8. While the phraseology employed in the text indicates a display of Divine power and grace, it also implies steady and unlimited advancement. A true believer is never like the sun when he sinks in the west, to be followed by the darkness of night; but is always like the sun "when he goeth forth in his might." They rise, but do not fall; always advance, but never recede. Their course is ever onward; and they are "changed from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

As soon as a man becomes a penitent sinner, he begins to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Christ. An unhumbled sinner knows but little of his own character and condition, of the Gospel, and of those things which belong to his peace. But as soon as ever men submit themselves to God, the eyes of their understanding are opened; and they emerge out of darkness into marvellous light. Travellers in the dark often miss their way; but when the morning

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comes, they see every thing clearly. Christians are all "the children of the light, and of the day;" and are no longer connected with the night and with darkness. Yet, however much good people may know in the present world, they know but "in part." In the disembodied state they shall know even as they are known, and more nearly resemble God Himself in their acquaintance with the true nature of things. No limit is fixed to their progress in knowledge; for throughout eternity they will always resemble the sun, "when he goeth forth in his might."

The progress of humble and obedient souls in spiritual freedom is equally steady and unlimited. Long had the Israelites been held in a state of captivity and bondage by Jabin, king of Canaan. But at the period referred to in the text, his power was broken, and his captives set free. It was indeed but for a very short time that they resembled the sun "when he goeth forth in his might;" for they soon rebelled against God, and were forsaken by Him, and again brought into bondage. But humble and obedient believers are delivered from the power of Satan, and need no more be led captive by him. "If the Son therefore make you free, ye shall be free indeed," and free for ever. Christ "must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." Christians must all die, and may be for a time overpowered by their enemies; but they are to go on from conquering to conquer, and to sing of salvation for ever and ever.

Our text further expresses an unlimited progress in happiness. Religion may begin in sorrow; but it is sure to end in gladness. Christians, indeed, in this world are sometimes great sufferers; but they have heard of the patience of Job, and know that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy. Even while "sorrowful," they are "always rejoicing;" and while the storm rages without, they have within the peace that

passes all understanding. By and bye, all tears are to be wiped from their eyes, and the days of their mourning are to be ended for ever. They that love His name shall be "as the sun when he goeth forth in his might."

II. In the text there is a class of persons who are characterized as the "enemies" of God. Whatever this term may signify when applied to others, so far as it refers to ourselves it denotes persons who *disregard their moral obligations, and care little or nothing about the Divine authority.* It may be that they will ask, "Why is a man obliged to keep his word?" write on moral philosophy, and talk of matters of sin and duty; but "they have no fear of God before their eyes," no concern to do those things which are acceptable in His sight. They are the enemies of God in the same sense in which the people invited to the Gospel feast were the enemies of Christ. They were extremely civil and polite; but they despised the invitation, and instead of accepting it, went, "one to his farm, another to his merchandise." These persons will do things that are right, or violate their most sacred obligations, —just according to their interest and inclinations. When they have done wrong, they refuse to repent, and to pray to God to pardon the fault they have committed. They just evince the temper described by the Psalmist, when he says, "The wicked through the pride of his countenance will not seek after God. God is not in all his thoughts."

Heaven and earth shall pass away; but the word of God shall not pass away. Moral laws are infallibly certain in their operation and results. Those who will not voluntarily submit to their authority will be compelled to do it, without—and even against their will. If people will neither abstain from doing that which is wrong; nor repent of their sin and pray to be forgiven,—out of deference to the Divine autho-

rity,—they will by that authority be sent to hell, and punished everlastingly. When it is said, "*So* let all thine enemies perish, O Lord," we infer that such persons shall not merely perish, but perish under circumstances very similar to those which attended the overthrow of Sisera and his army. It will therefore be proper to call your attention to a few particulars connected with the defeat and death of this remarkable man.

1. It is worthy of observation that this great disaster was preceded by a long career of prosperous iniquity. We read that Jabin, the sovereign of this famous general, had "nine hundred chariots of iron; and twenty years he mightily oppressed the children of Israel." So long did the patience of God bear with the injustice of these men; and so long did they enjoy the gains of their acts of oppression and wrong. All this time did they revel in the pleasures of sin before they tasted its bitter results.

This is a feature which characterizes the moral government of God, from one generation to another. In a few cases, vengeance has suddenly overtaken the guilty; but, in general, God "endures with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction." Many sinners, now living, have already been spared so long that they are beginning to say, in the spirit of unbelief, "Where is the promise of the coming of the Judge of all the earth?" All the forbearance of God is to be ascribed entirely to His compassion towards guilty men. "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." Yet all this delay is no proof that there will *never* be a day of retribution. If entire fields of corn and weeds are seen growing for weeks and months without being disturbed, until they are all ripe together,—that never leads us to conclude there never will be any harvest.

We know they are left to grow till they are ripe, for the very purpose of being cut down. If the wheat and the tares are long permitted to grow together, it is because God has already purposed one day to say to the destroying angel, "Thrust in thy sickle ; for the harvest is fully ripe."

2. While forbearance and delay increase the certainty of a future day of recompence, they at the same time prepare the way for its increased rigour and severity. In the case of Sisera, previous prosperity gave additional bitterness to the hour of adversity. It was doubly distressing to this famous general to be compelled to dismount, to escape on his feet and alone, and to save his life by begging for a little water ; after being for years accustomed to revel in luxury, and to ride through the land from one triumph to another.

No tongue can describe, no mind can imagine, the consternation felt by those persons who all their life long have disregarded or forgotten their moral obligations, when they shall hear a voice, which they are compelled to obey, saying unto them, " Give an account of thy stewardship ; for thou mayest be no longer steward." They thought that sin was a trifle, and supposed it was forgotten for ever ; and are beyond measure confounded, when it is found that " God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing."

3. There is another circumstance connected with the defeat of Sisera, which deserves attention. It was an event exactly the reverse of his expectations. Upon leaving home for the purpose of attacking the Israelitish army, it is plain that both himself and his family fully calculated on an easy victory, an increase of wealth and honour, and a speedy and triumphant return. When he failed to come back as was anticipated, the utmost anxiety was expressed by the members of his family. All at his house were expecting a triumphant conqueror,

with a number of helpless captives in his train ; and it was then that he became a fugitive, and sought admission into the tent of a stranger. When new laurels had been prepared, and were about to be entwined on his brow, he received a nail into his temples, and slept the sleep of death.

Equally bitter disappointment awaits those who will neither abstain from sin, nor seek to be forgiven ; for when they are in the act of saying, "Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them." It was doubtless a great disappointment to Haman, when he thought himself high in the favour of his sovereign, and was looking for further promotion and honour, to be suddenly condemned to die, and at once conducted to a gibbet. Jesus speaks of a man who was talking of pulling down his barns to build others, and saying to his soul, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years ; eat, drink, and be merry ;" when God said to him, "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee." Such disappointments as these, however, are light and trivial, compared with that felt by an unpardoned sinner when summoned to the bar of "the Judge of all the earth."

4. There is still another circumstance to be noticed, connected with this remarkable defeat. The death of Sisera was brought about in a way calculated to abase his pride, and to cover him with shame. Considering that he was a professed soldier, a successful commander, and a man who doubtless prided himself upon his military skill and courage, it is impossible to conceive how he could have fallen under more humiliating circumstances. A numerous, well-appointed, and veteran army was scattered to the winds ; while the general himself was so hard pressed as to be compelled to take to his feet, and flee for his life. Was this brought about by another army as numerous and as well-equipped as his own, and commanded by a general as famous as himself ? All was done by a contemptible body of mere recruits, aided, perhaps, by a horde of Jewish

peasantry, without arms, without discipline, and commanded by a leader who had no confidence in himself, and was entirely under the direction of another. Sisera fell,—not by the hand of a warrior, but by that of Jael, the wife of Heber;—not while nobly facing his enemy, but after he had turned his back and betaken himself to flight;—not on the battle-field, commonly called "the bed of honour," but in a tent into which he had crept for the purpose of concealing himself. The Divine prediction was fulfilled, "The Lord shall sell Sisera into the hands of a woman." A great captain, the scourge and terror of his age, fell, not covered with glory, but overwhelmed in shame and contempt.

Persons have sometimes been praised because they disregarded the restraints of morality and religion. Such is human vanity that there are people who will almost dare to be damned for the sake of being admired. When men begin to disregard the obligations of morality, under a notion that they will thereby acquire some credit to themselves, it is but right to inform them they are under a miserable mistake. All sin is sure to end in "shame and everlasting contempt."

From what has been said, it is plain that every man has a *conscience*, and it is chiefly by means of that conscience that God seeks to lead us in the way in which we ought to go. Conscience makes every man, and every child, feel that there is such a thing as moral obligation; even when the reason and understanding of a philosopher cannot tell him why some things are right and others wrong. Our inclinations often lean to worldliness and sin, while conscience tells us we ought to keep the commandments of God. When a man or a youth begins to listen to his conscience, he says to God, "Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory." This prepares him for the hour of death and the day of judgment.

VII.

ON THE BEGINNING OF CONVERSION.

"I begin to suspect that the Methodists have missed their way in not beginning low enough with children. We think so much about what the Moravians did for Mr. Wesley when he became a man, that we overlook what his mother did for him while but a child; and so fail to do the same for other children."

I. Methodists have thought less of children than of adults, through what Mr. Wesley says of the duration of the act of conversion. He represents his prejudices on this point as being much shaken by a perusal of the Acts of the Apostles "touching this very thing." He adds, "To my utter astonishment, I found scarcely any instances there of other than instantaneous conversions; scarce any so slow as that of St. Paul, who was three days in the pangs of the new birth." Next day, he "was beat out of this retreat too, by the concurring evidence of several witnesses, who testified God had thus wrought in themselves; giving them, in a moment, such a faith in the blood of His Son, as translated them out of darkness into light, out of sin and fear, into holiness and happiness." "Here," he adds, "ended my disputings." Some days afterwards he was "much confirmed" in these views by hearing the experience of "two living witnesses that God can (at least, if he does not always) give that faith, whereof cometh salvation, in a moment, as lightning falling from heaven."

All this is perfectly true. So are the facts which have been recorded in the personal history of Mr. Wesley himself. He was first awakened to a sense of religion while a child at home;—then he spent several years in the Charter-House, and at Oxford,—went to

America, and returned to this country,—before he met with those Moravians by whose instrumentality he obtained conscious peace with God, through faith in Christ. Yet was this but the beginning and the end of the same great work of God in his soul. That "faith whereof cometh salvation" was indeed given "in a moment," as "lightning from heaven;" but was *preceded* by what was preparatory, and of longer duration. The pledge was followed by the result: there was first the bud, and then the flower. . . . Methodism must inculcate not only such truths as Mr. Wesley heard from the Moravians, but also such as he learned from the teaching of his mother; that the masses of our children may become such as he was, and, like him, be "a people prepared of the Lord."

II. This comparative neglect of children is also occasioned by not considering the smallness of the beginnings of morality and religion, and the magnitude of the results to which they ultimately lead. At first they appear as the "bruised reed," or as "smoking flax;" but grow into a strong and victorious principle. Who then will despise "the day of small things;" when the broadest river is, near its source, but a feeble stream, and the largest oak has proceeded from an acorn? Moral habits are progressive. The seeds of hereditary depravity in a little child are feeble or dormant; in the adult idolater and cannibal they are developed and complete. In this country we behold but the beginning and tendency of original sin; but in heathen lands may be seen the frightful size to which it will ultimately grow. Moral goodness progresses in the same way; and there is an equal difference between its commencement and its conclusion. It begins in the intentions and resolutions of a child; and ends in the love and obedience of a glorified spirit.

Say not, therefore, that children have nothing to do with religion. Jehovah is the "God of the spirits of

all flesh," and claims an equal interest in the young and the old. He says to every child, "My son, give Me thine heart." Is it not perfectly reasonable, seriously and affectionately, to ask each one if he has already done so, or intends to comply with the just demand?

(Extracts from Letters.)

I.

Your notion of Mr. Wesley's character exactly agrees with my own; but it will oblige us to alter the date of the turning point in his history, and of the origin of Methodism. The Methodists generally say that the great crisis was after he had seen Peter Böhler, and was justified by faith; but we must say it was when, a child at home, he resolved to devote himself wholly to God. Unquestionably, the work of God in his soul had begun long before he saw the Moravians; and all that followed arose out of that "grain of mustard seed."

II.

Concerning the main work in which we are engaged I think a good deal. It appears to me to be our wisdom not to speak so much definitely of the "conversion" of children; but whenever we have occasion to refer to the work of grace in early life, to use some term of more general meaning. The word "conversion" has a strictly theological sense, and is differently understood. All are not of one opinion as to what constitutes conversion; and we may be involved in a dispute. If we merely speak of "the beginning of a gracious work," we are in no such danger. Besides, there may be two opinions as to whether young children are capable of being converted,

in the complete and Methodist sense of the term. But a work of grace, which shall certainly end in conversion, may begin in very early childhood. . . . As the root produces the flower, so a right answer of the conscience "towards God" leads directly to conversion and salvation. Our business is with the beginnings of religion in the mind of a child. Man is not responsible for success; but he is for the means used. In this country there always were means used for the salvation of children; but they were in many cases ill adapted to the end, and failed.

III.

God's plan obviously is, that all children should be baptized in infancy, and then so instructed in the Gospel that, when they come to choose and act for themselves, they should decide to be Christians. All such as attain that age, and *refuse* to be Christians, and *choose* to be worldly and wicked, I call "apostates." All bred heathens and baptized apostates must be *outwardly* and *visibly* converted. With this work Methodism began; and in this it has been more successful than any other community. But then there are children born every day, to be baptized in infancy, and brought up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." These also must be converted; but their conversion will be chiefly *inward* and *invisible:* little will appear outwardly; but the heart will be turned to God, and they will rise up to love Him and to keep His commandments. This is our work. I am sure it is God's method. *How* are we to further this work? Beginning with children, and dealing with them, till, in their teens, they give themselves to Christ and become members of His church.

IV.

I am fixed in the opinion that what children chiefly want is to have the conscience aroused, or *a deep sense of responsibility to God* awakened within them. This is essentially a moral principle. It may be excited, for the thing is there; and, when once it begins to stir, should be kept alive by a connexion with the church, and attendance upon her ordinances.

At present, it seems to be in every body's head that something or other must go before religion. Either it must be profligacy and then piety; or education and then conversion; or, in other words, schooling for children, and religion for adults. I believe Him who said, "Seek *first* the kingdom of God."

V.

All children, though fallen creatures, yet being redeemed by Christ are to be brought up for Him. John Wesley, "at eight years of age," became remarkable, "under the training of his excellent mother, for the seriousness of his spirit, and the general propriety of his behaviour, and was admitted to the Lord's Supper." It is not every kind of bringing up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" that is satisfactory. There is a wrong way of praying and hearing; so there is a wrong way of religiously training children. Outward instruction must be so given as to become connected with inward thought and feeling. In other words, children must be so instructed as to acknowledge the authority of God, and willingly consent to be His servants. Unless they do this, they will grow up to be worldly and wicked like other people. . . . . We are true Wesleyans; for John Wesley's conscience was awakened when quite a child.

VIII.

RELIGIOUS INDIFFERENCE: ITS CAUSE AND CURE.

"Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."—Rom. iv. 25.

The text speaks of man's "offences," and of his "justification." Both these expressions refer directly to the moral government of God. The more clear are our conceptions respecting the nature and exercise of the Divine authority, the better shall we understand both the "offences" and the "justification" here mentioned. The more we feel the truth and importance of God's moral government, the more shall we be concerned about the blessing here referred to.

I. Our own conscience tells us that there is a moral difference between one thing and another. We all know that *right* and *wrong* are not dreams, but realities. Every adult and every child knows that to tell a lie is to do a bad thing. There are also many other things which, as soon as they are named in our hearing, something within us decides that they are altogether wrong, and ought to be avoided.

It appears that these moral differences are all sanctioned by the God with whom we have to do. He marks them all, loves the right, and will punish the wrong. "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." He notices all the words and actions of men; and carefully observes the moral difference between them. When wrong is done by one man to another, God becomes its avenger.

Ananias told a lie to St. Peter; but God heard, and punished the offender. "Behold," says St. James, to some rich and unrighteous men, "the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth; and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth." These poor labourers were enduring wrong at the hand of their employers; but God had espoused their quarrel, and was about to punish the men who had defrauded them.

This moral government is inseparable from the nature of God; and therefore its exercise is as ancient as the creation, and as extensive as the intelligent universe. It was by this that evil spirits were cast out of heaven, and consigned to the pit of hell. It was by this that holy angels were crowned with glory and honour, and raised to the dignity and happiness they at present enjoy. It was under this government that man was placed in paradise, and received a command that was the test of obedience; for so long as it was respected, he was obedient in all other things. It is from the moral government of God that there emanates a day of final account and recompence.

Under this government we have all been placed, by our very birth and constitution; and under it we must always remain. We may submit, or we may rebel; but from the Divine rule we cannot possibly escape. If we are "willing and obedient," we shall "eat the good of the land;" if we "refuse and rebel," we shall "be destroyed:" but we shall, at all events, be the subjects of God's moral government, throughout all time, and all eternity. This was the high authority we presumed to resist when we consented to commit sin. By this power we shall be exalted to heaven, or cast down to hell. To this rule we voluntarily submit when we confess our sin, and begin to pray, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

II. Christ, it is here said, "was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification." It is a well-known fact that man became a sinner, and thereby rendered himself liable to eternal death and misery. God, however, in the exercise of His undoubted prerogative, determined to show mercy to the offender, and afford him the opportunity of escaping from the ruin he had brought upon himself. In point of fact, this was effected, not by the simple exercise of mercy, but by the mediation of Jesus Christ. In order that we might be saved, the second Person in the Godhead was to become a man, to die on a cross, and then to live in heaven, in the character of our Advocate. Accordingly, Christ was born in Bethlehem, was crucified on Calvary, rose again from the dead, and now "sitteth at the right hand of God." His atoning death was once endured, but is perpetually pleaded; for "He ever liveth to make intercession for us."

The reason of this mode of proceeding, as commonly stated by divines, appears to be this. God, in saving man, saw fit to display His justice as well as His mercy; His hatred to sin, together with His pity for the sinner. While men adored His grace, they were to dread His displeasure; and, though encouraged to hope for the pardon of their past sin, they were effectually deterred from going to sin again.

These various and seemingly opposite ends were all attained, when the Lord laid upon Christ the punishment due to "the iniquity of us all." We see, indeed, the justice of God, and His terrible hatred to sin, in the fires of hell and the sorrows of lost souls; but these lessons are far more impressively taught by the agonies and death of our adorable Redeemer. Christ was the only-begotten, the well-beloved Son of His Father; and yet, rather than sin should pass without punishment, He said, "Awake,

O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the Man that is My Fellow." Christ became "a curse" for us; and bare our penalty "in His own body on the tree." Every circumstance connected with His death proclaims, as in a voice of thunder, "The wicked shall not go unpunished;" and dissuades us from sin, by saying, in irresistible accents, "O do not this abominable thing which My soul hateth." That God, while He undertook to save man, should save him on such a principle as this, clearly demonstrates the fact of His moral government. It proves that, while He has "no pleasure in the death of the wicked," He "is holy in all His ways, and righteous in all His works."

While Christ was "delivered for our offences," he was "raised again for our justification." Every penitent and believing sinner is not simply pardoned, but, through the mediation of Christ, is "justified." In dealing with him, God acts not merely as a sovereign, setting the law aside, and delivering the offender from punishment; He also sustains the character of a judge, and acts according to law, the demands of which have all been satisfied by the death of Christ. Whenever the sinner is said to be "justified," reference is made to the blood of his Redeemer. No sinner, however penitent, could have been cleared from guilt and punishment, and cleared *according to law*, if Christ had not been there to plead what He had done and suffered in the transgressor's room and stead, and hence to demand his acquittal and release.

III. It is a notorious fact that very many persons are utterly unconcerned respecting both the sins which they have committed, and the blessing of their justification before God, through faith in Christ. They eagerly inquire, "What shall I eat? What shall I drink? Wherewithal shall I be clothed?" but

seldom do they even think of their sins; still less do they confess and forsake them. Seldom or never do they even seek to be justified before God. All this arises from their ignorance of the truth and nature of the moral government of God. When they are awakened out of sleep,—when they become alive to the fact of their personal responsibility, and understand the true state of things between God and their souls,—other feelings are awakened within them. Then they share in the feelings of him who "would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner." All will then happen to them which befel Saul of Tarsus, after he had seen Christ in His glory; and when he trembled and was astonished, and said, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

This state of feeling is the beginning of all evangelical salvation, and of all personal religion. It is the light of heaven, shining upon those souls who have long sat in darkness, and in the valley of the shadow of death. It is the call of the Son of God; to be followed by a moral resurrection, and the manifestation of spiritual life. These are the drawings of the Father, leading the sinner to Christ and salvation.

All this arises from a conscience awakened to a right apprehension of the moral government of God. Hence, it is alike common to heathens and nominal Christians, to cannibals and to civilized people, to adults and children, to aged sinners and to those of tender years. Every heathen and cannibal has a conscience. Every baptized profligate has a conscience. Every man and woman has a conscience. Every child has a conscience. Whenever *that* is appealed to, it will reply, in language too plain to be misunderstood, "Verily, there is a God that judgeth in the earth; and from His power it is impossible to escape."

To what was it that the missionaries sent to Fiji

made their appeal, but to the *conscience* of these cannibals? When that was awakened, they felt themselves to be condemned criminals in the presence of the Judge of all the earth, and were constrained to inquire, "What must I do to be saved?" To what was it that the early Methodist preachers made their appeal, but to the *consciences* of the sinners they addressed? and when these were awakened, the unhappy people were "washed, and sanctified, and justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." Mr. Wesley gives us several accounts of deep and general religious awakenings among children. When the *consciences* of these young creatures had been aroused from the sleep of sin, they felt their responsibility and danger, and became concerned "to flee from the wrath to come."

Be assured that our own children are just as capable of all this as were those who lived in former ages. It is expressly for the purpose of being thus awakened that they are born in such a country as this, in the blaze of Gospel day, and made members of the church of Christ by the ordinance of baptism. They are not placed in these favoured circumstances that they may grow up into a life of formality, without any remorse on account of sin, or any change of nature, whereby they may be brought to love God and keep His commandments. The Divine intention, in placing them where they now are, is, that they should be instructed and enlightened, until their conscience is aroused from its slumbers, till they feel themselves the subjects of God's moral government, and become filled with concern about the "offences" and the "justification" spoken of in the text. This will render them willing to meet in class; while others will be ready to receive and assist them in seeking the salvation of God. At present children are generally careless and unconcerned respecting the work of

Christ, the sins they have committed, and the justification He has promised to bestow; and we are very apt to think that they will and must feel and act in this way, so long as they are young, but that they will be in a better state of mind when they arrive at years of maturity; and hence many readily conclude to wait for a more convenient season. This, however, is a flagrant, though a common mistake; and it may be truly said, even of the state of childhood itself, "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

It is commonly said that "delays are dangerous;" and this has appeared in the moral history of mankind in all ages. Such as are not converted in early life, when they rise into maturity often imitate the prodigal son, who left his father's house, went into a far country, and there brought himself to a state of great destitution and misery. It is said, indeed, of him, that he returned again to his father, was welcomed back with transports of joy, and restored to all that he had lost by his folly. But the story of many a prodigal has a very different conclusion. Many a sinner has died in his sins, never returned to his father, and never again seen the home and the family he had left. It is not the happiness of every sheep, that chooses to go off into the wilderness, to be laid upon the shoulders of the shepherd, and brought back to the fold with rejoicing. Multitudes have wandered and bleated, until they have fallen into the jaws of the wolf, been torn to pieces, and perished utterly and for ever. True it is, that we read in the Gospel narrative of one penitent malefactor, who obtained forgiveness in the very agonies of death. But sinners do not always seek and find mercy on a death-bed. Aged offenders have often left the world with minds as dark as midnight, and hearts hardened by the deceitfulness of sin; while "condemned already," and with "the wrath of God" abiding upon them.

We may fondly cling to the opinion that men will become more religious as they grow older, and continue to say, "Days should speak, and the multitude of years should teach wisdom;" but we may rest assured that whether human beings are old or young, whenever conscience is aroused, and they are rendered alive to the moral government of God, they will feel concerned about their souls, and will apply to Him "who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification."

The time appears to have come when the Methodists are called to imitate the inhabitants of Nineveh. They repented, it is said, at the preaching of Jonah; and, behold, One "greater than Jonah" is appealing to us on behalf of the children He has redeemed with His own blood. We read that when the king heard of the proclamation of the prophet, "he came down from his throne, covered himself with sack-cloth, and sat in ashes." To all the inhabitants of that vast city it was said, by a public decree, "Let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands;" and it is added that God "saw their works," that they listened to this exhortation, and actually "turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil that He had said He would do unto them; and He did it not."

We want, in Methodism, a similarly general movement for the evangelization of our children. This great subject needs to be talked about in our pulpits, in our families, in our schools, and in our class-meetings. Hundreds of thousands of children are looking to Methodism, and asking, "Which is the way in which we ought to walk?" God says, and we should take up the words, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead." Don't say, "It is of no use, they are yet too young; we must wait until they are older." Every one of them has a conscience; and all are, even now, able to hear.

IX.

"BEING BORN AGAIN . . BY THE WORD OF GOD."

Many people hear the word of God without submitting to its authority; and therefore it never becomes in them the principle of a new and holy life. Felix, the Roman governor of Judea, heard that word from the lips of St. Paul himself; he knew its requirements were perfectly just and right; but he refused to submit and obey: and therefore never was "born again," never became a truly moral and religious man.

While the Apostle was a prisoner, in the custody of this governor, he sent for him frequently, and heard him discourse on the Christian religion. On one of these occasions, St. Paul, we are told, reasoned of "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come," until Felix trembled while hearing him. This appeal came from God, it was made to his conscience, and he felt it to be just and reasonable. He knew it was right that he should give over taking bribes, and oppressing the people placed under his care; and begin to be just and equitable in all his transactions. What the Apostle said about temperance commended itself to his conscience "in the sight of God." He saw it was strictly proper that he should control his passions and habits, and bring them into subjection to reason and religion. To him nothing appeared more likely than a "judgment to come." At present, it often happens that "there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked;" and the character of God renders it very probable that a

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day is coming when the secrets of all hearts will be made manifest, and men shall be rewarded "according to their works." Before that Judge Felix felt he was not prepared to stand; and therefore he "trembled," while hearing the Apostle. Had he made a right use of that opportunity, and yielded to what he heard, he might have been "born again . . by the word of God," and have entered at once upon a career of rectitude and happiness, which would have continued for ever. But, though seemingly shut up to a right course, he contrived to make his escape by an evasion and a lie. He said to the Apostle, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." Refusing to submit to the authority of the word of God, he remained a stranger to the life which is here contemplated, and as wicked and miserable as he was before. . . . .

In the sixteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, we see under what different circumstances the Holy Spirit implants the true principle of all religion in the heart of fallen man. There we read of the conversion of Lydia and of the Philippian jailor. Both these persons appear to have first received a message from heaven. Their salvation was not of themselves, but altogether the gift of God. It is said that Paul and Silas went to the place "where prayer was wont to be made;" and there "spake unto the women which resorted thither." Most likely through his intercourse with the Apostles, the dark mind of the jailor was visited by the light of heaven. The conversion of Lydia was brought about in silence and without apparent excitement; and was probably confined chiefly to her judgment and her conscience: while that of the jailor was attended by a great deal of feeling, and his passions aided his conscience, and led him to resolve to submit to be saved by grace. Concerning Lydia it is said that the Lord "opened"

her heart, "that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." Conscience told her that what the Apostle said was clearly just and true. It was morally right that she should become a Christian; as much as it was that she should speak the truth, and pay her debts. That, with her, was quite sufficient; and she resolved, at once, to do what she knew to be right, and was accordingly baptized, and became a follower of Christ. On the other hand, the jailor did that which he saw to be right; but, before he decided on this course, he was deeply affected, being moved to the depths of his soul. In the midst of all this tumult of passion, his conscience was silently at work; and he resolved to become a Christian, because he saw that to be morally right; and was, accordingly, immediately baptized.

Many of you who are still unconverted have, for years, been in the habit of hearing the word of God; and you know that all its requirements are perfectly just and right. God "has commanded all men everywhere to repent." Since you are all sinners, conscience tells you it is as morally right that you should repent as it is that a child should obey its parents. What can be more right than that those who have acted improperly should acknowledge their transgressions, put away the evil of their doings, "cease to do evil," and "learn to do well?" There are times when people think that if they were but affected like the jailor, this mental agony would lead to their conversion, and end in newness of life. But let me tell you, that conversion is an affair of *conscience*, and that it is neither more nor less than a resolution to do what you know to be right. Without such a resolution, were you as much alarmed as was the jailor, when the earthquake shook the foundations of the prison; or were you agitated as he was, when he "called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, Sirs,

what must I do to be saved?" your religion would be very short-lived. This tumult of feeling would soon subside, and your goodness would prove as "the morning cloud." On the contrary, you might be as unmoved as was Lydia when the Lord opened her heart, "that she attended unto the things which were spoken by Paul;" yet, if you listen to the voice of God, follow the dictates of your conscience, and resolve to do that which you know to be right, you are then in the way of being "born again . . by the word of God." Your conversion has already begun. Angels already begin to rejoice on your account; for there is "joy in heaven" over every sinner "that repenteth." Such persons are authorized, every day and every hour, to expect the love of God to be shed abroad in their heart, by the Holy Ghost given unto them. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." . . . .

Why has Christ told His servants to begin with children? Why has He said to His people, "Exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin?" It is just because He knows that so long as conversion is delayed there is a deceptive and a hardening process constantly going on, and a much smaller number will be raised from a death in sin to a life of righteousness.

Christ said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." Not all men absolutely, but all who can be attracted by moral goodness. Truth and love are the proper "cords of a man." Christ draws men to Himself by means of their conscience.

X.

MORAL CHARACTER.

"For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace."—ROM. viii. 6.

IN the twenty-fifth chapter of St. Matthew, we find recorded our Saviour's description of the great day of final judgment. Jesus there tells us that the Son of man shall come from heaven "in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him;"—that He shall "sit upon the throne of His glory, and before Him shall be gathered all nations; and He shall separate them one from another," according to their moral character, "as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats." We cannot read of such a separation as this, without thinking of the effects it is likely to produce upon the minds of the parties themselves. The righteous will hail the coming of the Judge with shouts of holy joy: among the wicked there will "be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth."

All this is already begun; and that not by the Judge, but by the parties who are then to be judged. At present, people separate from each other; some choosing to be morally good, and others to be bad. They are actuated by different spirits; and they walk in different paths. Already, the righteous are happy, and the wicked are miserable. In that day the Judge of all the earth will but complete what is at present begun. Even now, "to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace."

It is well known that in the Bible the terms "flesh" and "spirit" have many and very different significations. Without at present enumerating all these, we

shall merely remark that they are sometimes used in a moral sense, and simply denote principles and actions which, morally speaking, are either good or bad. It is said, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." By sowing "to the flesh" is here simply meant doing that which is morally wrong; and sowing "to the Spirit" means doing what is morally right. The great laws of morality are as certain in their operation as are the laws of matter. A husbandman reaps a harvest of wheat, or barley, or oats, just according to the nature of the seed he sows. Wicked actions can lead only to the misery of hell, which is "corruption," or the second death; and righteous actions are sure to end in the happiness of heaven, which is "life everlasting."

By being spiritually minded, then, we are to understand minding the things which are *morally right*,—or in other words, minding the things which *God has commanded*. For, whether it be that He has commanded certain things because they were previously right, or that these things are right because He has commanded them, certain it is that His command, and that which is right, are always one and the same thing. His "law is holy," and His "commandment holy, and just, and good." This is perfectly true, whether we speak of the precepts of what is called "the moral law," or of the precepts of the Gospel. The moral law says, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart." That, we know, is, in its own nature, universally and unchangeably just and right. The Gospel enjoins "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." This, under all the circumstances of the case, is equally right. If it be true that "all have sinned,"—then it is right that all should repent. Whenever a person has done wrong,

he ought, in justice, to acknowledge the wrong, be sorry for it, and pray to be forgiven. If it be true that Jesus is the Son of God, and that there is no salvation for sinful men but in Him,—then it is strictly right that we should believe in His name, trust in Him for salvation, and submit to His authority. If it be true that God approves only of those things that are just in their own nature,—then it is right that we should walk before Him unto all well-pleasing, being fruitful in every good word and work. To mind the things that are morally right is to be a true Christian; and that is to be "spiritually minded," in the sense of the text. It is not merely to know the difference between right and wrong; but it is, further, to affect the right, to choose it, to embrace it, and to adhere to it, in preference to all other things. These two states of mind, and the difference between them, may be clearly seen in the conduct of Herod the tetrarch and John the Baptist.

Herod knew it was wrong to have his brother's wife; he knew it was wrong to shut up John in prison; and he knew it was wrong to put that holy man to death for having done his duty. But whatever Herod might know, he was not a spiritually minded man. He might see the right; but he did not choose it; he did not prefer it to all the world beside, and even to life itself. He was a miserable captive, tied and bound with the chain of his sins. He had put himself into the power of a profligate woman; he was under the dominion of the devil, bound, hand and foot, by bad passions and habits. He was sorry for what he did; but on certain considerations, which could have weight only with a bad man, he commanded that the prophet should be put to death, and his head delivered into the hands of those that hated him. His conscience told him he was doing wrong; and his mind must have sunk into a state of fearful darkness and horror,

when he heard of the miracles of Jesus, and thought that the Baptist had risen from the dead, and was about to avenge his murder upon the head of its miserable author.

On the other hand, John was a truly spiritually minded man. He not merely knew the difference between right and wrong; but he affected the right, he chose it, he adhered to it; and that to the loss of all the world, and even of life itself.

This holy man knew, by express revelation from God, that Jesus was the Christ; and he openly declared that to be the fact; although he was quite aware that, in so doing, he was tolling the knell of his own fame; for, while Jesus was rising into more extended honour, His forerunner must sink into obscurity and neglect. When the Pharisees and Sadducees came to his baptism, and professed to regard him as a teacher sent from God, he said to them, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" Yet he well knew such language was likely to give offence to these grandees of the nation, and for ever to alienate them from his person and ministry. Herod heard John often and gladly, and reverenced him as a good and holy man; yet he said to this friendly and royal sinner, "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife;" it is a wilful and flagrant violation of the Divine law, and a sin against God. All the time he fully understood what he was doing, was aware of the bitter hatred he should incur, and saw it to be very probable that his fidelity might cost him his life. Whoever loves the right, as John the Baptist loved it; and will choose it, and adhere to it, at all risks to himself, is one of those spiritually minded characters contemplated in the text.

I. Our attention is here first directed to the effects produced by the absence of this inward feeling and habit of life. "To be carnally minded is death."

Perhaps the principle involved in these words, and the meaning of the clause, may be brought out and illustrated by a reference to the parable concerning the "rich man," of whom it is said that "in hell he lifted up his eyes."

It is worthy of observation that no charge of outward and flagrant immorality is preferred against this man. Morally speaking, he seems to have been one of those negative characters who are neither greatly blamed nor commended. On the one hand, he did not pursue a course of open cruelty, or avarice, or sensuality; and on the other, he did not much trouble himself with the commandments of God, or about doing those things which are right in His sight. He did not, it appears, consider himself as a steward, entrusted for a time with what belonged to another, and hence applying to his Master to know how He would have His own property employed; but, without consulting Him at all, he proceeded to imitate his wealthy neighbours, to lay out upon himself the money in his hands, and, right or wrong, "was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day." He suffered the beggar to be laid at his gate, and fed by the refuse of his table; not because God had told him to be merciful, or because such considerate conduct would be acceptable to Him; but merely because other men of his rank were kind to the poor; or because the whole subject was beneath his notice, and about it he neither knew nor cared. "It came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." Probably the rich man never heard of this, never thought of the Judge who was just at his own door, nor of the account shortly to be given by himself. However, forgetfulness was unconnected with security; and though he thought little of his Maker and his Judge, God seems to have thought about him, just as He does about all

uch characters; for he "died, and was buried; and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments."

This sad result was not more brought about by the sentence of God than it was the natural and necessary issue of the course this "rich man" had pursued, and the principles by which he had been actuated. A life spent without God, and destitute of what is morally acceptable to Him, can have no other conclusion. As all seed produces a crop like itself; so "he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption;" "for the end of these things is death."

Among ourselves there are many characters of the same negative kind, in all matters of a moral nature. They know and are inwardly convinced that they ought now to repent, and seek forgiveness, and do works meet for repentance. But they do not mind what is right, but only what is agreeable to themselves, and in harmony with the opinions and practices of other people. In all this there is no moral principle; and it can lead only to sin and misery. "To be carnally minded is death." Such a life is incipient death in this world, and completed and eternal death in that which is to come. All who disregard what is morally right are actuated by the spirit of this rich man; and when they leave the body, it may be said of them, as it has been said of him, that "in hell" they lift up their eyes.

II. But "to be spiritually minded is life and peace."

To choose what is morally right, and to adhere to it under all circumstances, is a clear proof of the existence of the life of God in the soul of man, and is a cause and source of endless peace and happiness. Our Lord said, in His discourse to Nicodemus, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Christ is really the Son of God, and came into the

world to save sinners; and therefore, that we should believe in Him is a thing which is perfectly proper and right in its own nature. Whoever does this shall not only possess eternal life in the next world, but finds it already begun in his soul. Even now, he is born again, has entered into the kingdom of God, and shares in the blessings of the Christian salvation. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." There is a good deal of what is incomprehensible connected with this entire subject. We are unable exactly to tell what is the work of God and the duty of man, in the conversion of a sinner; but we know that spiritual mindedness is a proof of the existence of a Divine life in the soul; and that whoever loves and chooses that which is morally right, is made a partaker of the Divine nature, is a child of God by faith in Christ, and an imitator of his Father in heaven.

The inseparable connection there is between doing what is right on the part of man, and the bestowment of supernatural blessings on the part of God, is evident from the words of St. John in his first Epistle. He says, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." There may indeed be a question of precedence; and which of these two things is the first in order may be a debated point. An Arminian may say, A man must first believe that Jesus is the Christ, and then he will be "born of God." A Calvinist may reply, No, he must first be "born of God," and then he will believe that Jesus is the Christ. Whoever may be right, and whoever may be wrong, in this famous dispute, we know that free grace and free will are in perfect agreement with each other; that obedience and blessing are inseparably connected; that "to be spiritually minded is life;" and that "whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." All who are resolved to choose and to do that which is

morally right, and therefore acceptable in the sight of God, are at present partakers of the Divine nature, exhibit the moral likeness of God Himself, and shall hereafter be admitted to dwell with Christ and to behold His glory.

Another effect of the presence of this temper and habit of mind is happiness. To be spiritually minded is "peace" as well as "life." All such persons find the blessedness of heaven begun in the present state of being.

They are in possession of a peace which is not procured by denying the facts of their case. Some there are who obtain a kind of peace by denying the doctrine of man's responsibility, and cherishing sceptical and irreligious notions. St. Peter speaks of scoffers, who should appear in "the last days," walking after their own lusts, and saying, in an unbelieving spirit, "Where is the promise of His coming?" "You maintained that man was an accountable creature; that there would be a day of reckoning; and that we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. But 'where is the promise of His coming?' We see no signs of His appearing, and infer that you have been trying to frighten us by a false representation, and that He will never come at all." Such opinions may buoy up the spirits for a season; and for a time men may find happiness in unbelief. But to be spiritually minded is to believe what is true, as well as to do what is right. That 'there is none righteous, no, not one,' and that "God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing," is as true as that we are now in this place. We may be condemned already; but the Gospel speaks of forgiveness; and without denying the facts of our case,—without being given up to "strong delusion" to "believe a lie,"—by simply doing that, which, under our actual circumstances, is perfectly just and right,—we may obtain the peace which passes all understanding, and which will endure for ever.

This happiness may be secured without ignoring, as well as without denying, the facts of our case. It is not said that the sinners of the old world persuaded themselves that there would be no flood; they simply disregarded the testimony of Noah, and gave themselves no trouble about the danger they had incurred. "They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage," and thought nothing of the God they had provoked by their sin, "until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all." But in order to be happy, men need not be infatuated. By being spiritually minded,—by doing what is morally right,—they may find that peace which is heaven begun below. Well-doing is always, for Christ's sake, rewarded with a peace the world cannot give.

Some persons are almost disposed to blame the martyr Stephen when he no longer confined himself to the duties belonging to the office of a deacon, to which he had been appointed. He was drawn into a dispute with some learned Jews, who "were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake." The result was, that men were suborned, false witnesses were set up, he was haled before the Sanhedrim, and there solemnly condemned to die. But Stephen, all this time, was simply seeking to do that which was morally right in itself, and acceptable to his God and Saviour; and hence he became a very happy man. While his enemies condemned him to die, he looked upward, and exclaimed, "I see heaven opened, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God." Being stoned to death, and in the very act of dying, he said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit;" and having committed his soul to the care of Him who had redeemed it, he "fell asleep," and forgot all his sorrows for ever.

Yet, somehow or other, an impression generally prevails that the contrary of what is stated in the

text is the literal truth. Solomon says, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth;" but young people conclude that this is at variance with their true interest and happiness. They feel sure that though youthful piety may be right, yet the way to enjoy themselves is to follow the course of the world while they are young; and to leave the solemn business of religion until the years arrive when we are obliged to say, "I have no" more earthly "pleasure in them."

"Why," say they, "how can we remember our Creator, without at the same time thinking of death, when the dust returns to dust, and the spirit to God who gave it; and also of the great day of account, when 'God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing?' Such thoughts will lead us to dwell on all that is awful connected with the invisible and eternal world. How can we be happy when full of such thoughts as these?"

Yet it is perfectly true that to be spiritually minded is "peace." So long as a man does that which is morally right, pleases God, and is approved by Him, he must be happy; even though overwhelmed with sorrow and affliction. Was not Joseph happy, even after he had been sold for a slave, and was on his way to Egypt? It is true he had been deeply injured by his own brothers, he was leaving an affectionate father, whom he might never meet again, and was going into a country he had never seen before, not knowing what might befal him there. But God was with him; he was about to be delivered and honoured; and was, even then, an eminently happy young man. Was not St. Paul happy, though "alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake?" If we are spiritually minded we shall be happy; not only in the days of youth and health and prosperity, but in the time of trial and suffering we shall feel that "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.'

XI.

ON THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Jesus once said to His hearers, "Which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish." Of course the all-wise God never acts on any such mistaken principle as this. He intended to save the human race when He "so loved the world" as to give "His only-begotten Son" for its redemption. But, before a single step was taken in this great enterprize, He had counted the cost, and knew that He was able to finish it. This vast undertaking of mercy was at first a purpose conceived in the mind of the eternal Father; its execution began in the incarnation and death of God the Son; and it is completed by the agency of God the Holy Ghost.

The office of the Holy Spirit is to give effect to the redeeming scheme, and to save from sin those for whom Jesus died. His work is essentially moral. It is not merely intellectual; for He is not sent to save men from ignorance, by making them learned or intelligent. Nor is His work outward and social; for He does not come to save men from poverty, and elevate them to wealth, and to some higher rank in the scale of society. The business of the Spirit of God is to save men from *sin;* from its guilt and punishment, by assuring them of forgiveness and acceptance with God; from its principles and practice, by changing their nature, or renewing them in the

spirit of their minds. This is a large and comprehensive work; it has a beginning, a middle, and an end.

1. In the first place, the Holy Spirit aids us in discovering God as our moral Governor, and in submitting ourselves to His authority. After Adam had sinned, he forgot the adorable Author of his being; and would, in all probability, have remained a stranger to Him, had he not heard His voice and been compelled to stand in His presence. This was an interview of the nature of which his conscience alone was capable of taking cognizance. Adam was not brought into the presence of his God merely to have his knowledge increased, or his feelings excited. It was to talk about his offence, to tell him of the consequences of his conduct, and to make him understand that he was an accountable creature, and that, as he had a Maker and a Preserver, so he had a Judge, who would be sure to inquire into what he had done.

As the children of Adam, we, too, fell in him, and are all "born in sin." The same darkness has settled upon our minds; and it is probable we should for ever remain strangers to God, and forgetful of Him, did He not, in various ways, force Himself upon our attention. In that revelation which God made to the Jewish nation, He tells us distinctly what was the end He sought chiefly to attain. He says, "I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings." God really is the moral Governor of the human race; and those who do not know Him under that character do not truly know Him at all. He is the universal Lawgiver, and the Judge of all the earth. David said to his son Solomon, "Know thou the God of thy father." "Understand the character of God; and, in order to this, deeply consider the relationship between Himself and thee. He is the moral Ruler of the world, and if thou sub-

mit to Him, He will be thy Protector; but if thou rebel against Him, He will not fail to bring thee to destruction." Solomon himself has also said to all young people, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth." "As God is your Creator, so He is your moral Governor, and will one day call you to an account for your actions. He is often disregarded and forgotten, especially by young people; but I entreat you to remember Him; consider His character, until you submit to His authority."

While this is the general tenor and import of God's appeal to His fallen creatures, so there is a conscience in man himself, which responds to this appeal, and is an echo to this voice. This is plain from the language of Joseph's brethren, after they had gone to buy corn in Egypt, and when they felt themselves to be in the midst of some providential mystery, and were unable to ascertain how it would end. "And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us. And Reuben answered them, saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? Therefore, behold, also his blood is required." They were then not better informed than they had always been; for perplexity and trouble do not tell us any thing that we did not know before. They knew they were doing wrong, when they sold their brother into slavery, and were deaf to all his tears and entreaties. They understood, also, very well, that although this cruel wrong had been done to a younger brother, who was unable to help himself, God saw what they had done, and was greatly displeased with their conduct; and, as His providence was over all events, so it was working against them, and, "therefore," said they, "is this distress come upon us." All this was the language of conscience;

and conscience had become a response to God's appeal, when He told them He was their moral Governor, and was an echo to the voice which said they were responsible to Him.

There is the same conscience in every one of you; and it answers to God's appeal, and admits that He is your moral Governor, and that His demands are all holy, and just, and good. You know very well that if you have not done what these men did, you are "verily guilty" in many other ways; and that you ought to fall at His feet, and sue for mercy and forgiveness. The prodigal son in the parable said, "I will arise, and go to my father;" and, from the midst of all his poverty and misery, "he arose," and went. Whenever your *will* becomes obedient to your *conscience*, and you resolve to act according to its dictates, you may "lift up your heads with joy; for your redemption draweth nigh." The prodigal did not return home on any business but what was purely moral. He went to acknowledge his fault, and to see if his father would forgive him. Had he gone in any other temper, or for any other purpose, his return had been in vain; but, as things were, he was welcomed back with transports of joy. Your conscience has long echoed to the voice of God. You know that you have done wrong in forsaking Him, and in violating His commands. Had your will obeyed the dictates of your conscience, you would all long since have gone and humbled yourselves at His feet. But some of you have thought, again, this course was likely to be attended with many inconveniences; you have refused to do what you know to be right, and are still in the far country, plunging deeper and yet deeper into misery.

It is the office of the Holy Spirit to aid us in this great duty. He unstops our ears that we may listen to the voice of God when He tells us that He is our moral Governor, opens our eyes that we may see

His glory and the wisdom of submitting to His authority, and inclines our hearts to obey His voice. In a word, the Holy Spirit assists the sinner in the entire business of his return to God; so that he is enabled to exercise that sorrow which "worketh repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of."

2. Again, the Holy Spirit assists us in the work of believing in Christ, and renders us happy in the forgiveness of sin. As soon as a sinner becomes alive to the fact that God is the moral Governor of the world, he is filled with alarm and uneasiness. He perceives, at once, that he has been a transgressor from the womb, that God is of purer eyes than to behold sin without displeasure, and that therefore he is by Him "condemned already." So long as he was ignorant of this fact, he was at ease in his own mind; but when the truth has at last burst upon his attention, it has filled him with anxiety. Such people ask with eagerness, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" They are directed to the great Mediator, as the way to peace and acceptance with God; and it is said to them, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." But people will never, in fact, come to Christ, unless they are drawn towards Him by discovering something, in His character and office, suited to their case, and equal to their necessities. "And I," said Jesus, "if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." Whoever sees Christ in the light of the Holy Spirit is led to exclaim, "Plenteous grace with Thee is found!" "His blood cleanseth from all sin." "He is able to save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by Him." When sinners in this way "view the Lamb in His own light" they are constrained to trust in Him for mercy and salvation. They say, "I will trust, and not be afraid; for He is mighty to save, full of compassion, and has declared, 'Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out.'"

It is said of the Philippian jailor that he "rejoiced,

believing in God with all his house." All his guilty terrors and alarm, it appears, had subsided, and were followed by an inward peace and joy in believing. He must, therefore, have felt that his sins were forgiven, and that he was now reconciled to God. But how did he arrive at the knowledge of this wonderful fact? Jesus had said to the woman who came to Him in Simon's house, "Thy sins be forgiven." He knew the mind of the Father, and she was assured of the Divine favour by the direct testimony of God Himself. But the jailor had not arrived at the knowledge of the same fact in the same way. Christ was not visibly present at Philippi. Him "the heaven must receive until the times of the restitution of all things." But he lived under the dispensation of the Spirit; and the love of God was shed abroad in his heart "by the Holy Ghost" given unto him. That Spirit sustains the same office at the present day. He "beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." "Whosoever," said Christ, "drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall thirst no more;" but there shall be in his inmost soul a source of holiness and happiness, which shall flow on until it issues in the blessedness of heaven.

3. But the Holy Ghost is a Sanctifier as well as a Comforter. While He leads us to Christ in the exercise of faith, and while He fills us with a peace that passeth understanding, He also renews us in the spirit of our mind. Such as have been justified by faith, and know their sins forgiven, are expected to walk before God in holiness and righteousness. But holy actions can proceed only from a holy nature. Before the outward conduct can be correct, the heart must be made right with God. To do that is the work of the Holy Ghost. He sanctifies our nature, while He makes our peace to flow as a river; and to what extent He will do this, even in the present life, it is impossible exactly to ascertain. It is announced, as the end of the death

of Christ, "that He might redeem us from all iniquity." This great design the Holy Ghost will realize in all its extent; for this very God of peace will sanctify us wholly, and in answer to prayer, preserve our "whole spirit and soul and body" "blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Between the beginning, the middle, and the end of this work of the Holy Spirit there is an intimate connection. He first awakens us to an apprehension of the moral government of God, and fills us with a holy fear of offending Him, and of further incurring His righteous displeasure. Then He leads us to faith in Christ, makes us happy in the forgiveness of sin, and enables us to love God with all our heart. He does not first inspire us with legal and then with antinomian notions. It is not His plan first to make us cautious, and then to render us less circumspect by making us more evangelical. However happy we are in the assurance of pardon and acceptance with God, and however far advanced in sanctification, we still continue to stand in awe of Him as the moral Governor of the world. Men walk "in the fear of the Lord," while they enjoy "the comfort of the Holy Ghost," rejoice in Christ Jesus, and love Him with a supreme affection.

"The promise is unto . . your children." As individuals are to "work out" their own salvation with fear and trembling, when they know that it is God who worketh in them, "to will and to do;" so the Spirit is promised to our children that we may no longer regard them with a feeling of despondency. We are to seek their salvation with an energy and perseverance which hope alone can inspire. Methodists are not to stand looking at their young people, and saying, "Can these dry bones live?" but are to begin to "prophesy," by declaring the word of the Lord. Under the life-giving influence of the Holy Ghost, they will arise and stand up "an exceeding great army."

XII.

EARLY RELIGIOUS DECISION TO BE CALLED FOR.

"Choose ye this day whom ye will serve."—JOSH. xxiv. 15.

I AM not now going to put myself into the place of Joshua, and to call upon you to-day to choose for yourselves whether you will serve the Lord or not. That, I take for granted,—so far as you are concerned,—is a point which has been settled already. But although you may not be in possession of any political authority, there are many young people under your control, before whom it is your solemn duty to bring the subject of religion; and I am about to hold up the example of Joshua for your imitation; and to recommend you to urge—as he did—all beneath your care to decide at once upon their religious course and character.

I. My first observation will be, that *such a personal choice is indispensably necessary.*

1. Religion is a personal thing. It is a matter altogether between a man and his Maker. Every man must give an account of himself unto God. That account, whenever it may take place, will be altogether unsatisfactory, if not found to include his individual choice and consent. He may belong to a professing nation, or be a member of a Christian church; but he will never be treated as one of the subjects of Christ, unless he has submitted to His authority, by an act of his own will. It was the opinion of the Jews that they should be admitted into heaven, merely because they were the sons of Abraham. But Jesus speaks of one of the children of that patriarch as lifting up his eyes

"in hell;" and thereby teaches us that God will acknowledge only those who voluntarily choose to be His people. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem," said the Saviour, "how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings; and ye would not!" Because they never chose to submit to His authority, they were never taken under His protection, but were left to perish in their sins. Privileges were lavished upon the Jewish people, and the most strenuous efforts were made to save them; and yet numbers of them were utterly and finally rejected by God, because it is said they, personally, and for themselves, "hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord."

2. Whatever might be the determination of God, there would be no devout and holy life but by a deliberate choice or act of the will. It is commonly said, "Where there is a will, there is a way;" but there is no way to do that for which we have no will. Why do sinners refuse to turn to God, when the Gospel so distinctly calls them to repentance, and offers them a pardon? Just because they have no *will* to put away the evil of their doings.

On the other hand, how came St. Paul to say, in the midst of unusual and determined opposition, "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus?" It was because he had chosen the service of Christ; and it was his *will* to obey Him, and that unto the end. How came the martyrs to fight so hard a battle, and to obtain so glorious a victory; for it is said, "They overcame him through the blood of the Lamb," and "they loved not their lives even unto the death?" It was just because they were the willing people of Christ, and had chosen Him as their Master and King. It is said, "Strait is the gate, and narrow

is the way that leadeth unto life;" yet there are people who enter this gate, and travel in this road, and climb this hill; and they do it because it is their will and desire to see the land which is afar off. Our children must, therefore, themselves choose Christ for their Master; or they will never "fight the good fight of faith," and "lay hold on eternal life."

3. Whatever may be done for a youth, his condition, religiously, is unsatisfactory until the work has been completed by an act of his own will. Parents are allowed to bind their son an apprentice until he be twenty-one years of age. Then the law assumes that he is old enough to act for himself; and if he is to serve his master any longer, it must be by his own consent. Parents present their infant for baptism, a minister admits him into the Christian church, other people engage to assist in his religious instruction; but all this cannot be brought to any satisfactory issue without the individual consent of the baptized party himself. Many a youth who has been so baptized has afterwards refused to submit himself to Jesus Christ; and has thereby defeated the end of his baptism, plunged himself into ruin, and brought down the grey hairs of his parents with sorrow to the grave. Our children are baptized in early life; but it is only when they repent and believe the Gospel for themselves, and each of them chooses to be a servant of Jesus Christ, that they become Christians indeed, and partakers of the great salvation. All children, therefore, who have attained the age of discretion, must, for themselves, personally and individually "choose" whom they will serve.

II. Our next observation is, that *all young people, in making this decision and this choice, need to be urged and assisted by their friends.* If they can but be brought to make any choice at all, it will generally

be a right one; but, unhappily, they often are unwilling to come to any resolution at all. Few are so blind and fool-hardy as to make choice of a worldly and a wicked life. Often indeed do men spend their time in such a way as this; but it appears to be by accident rather than design. They have no settled plan of life beforehand; but just float along the stream, from one day to another. Their conduct just depends upon the company into which they fall, and the circumstances into which they are thrown. Many, indeed, at the end of life, are heard to say, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." They have lived; but it has been according to the course of this world. They have spent their days; but have merely followed the devices and desires of their own hearts. Such a result of life, however, is often astonishing, even to themselves. They never meant to walk in such a way as this. To themselves it appears as if they were but just awaking out of sleep. Life has passed away; but it seems just like a dream. They intended to live wisely, and to leave the world, not as they are now actually doing, in a state of darkness and despair, but "in sure and certain hope" of a resurrection to eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The great reason why facts are so different from intentions is, because young people often have a great unwillingness to "choose" whom they will serve. They cannot choose a worldly life, and they will not choose a holy life; and so they put off the matter to some more convenient season; and in the end live on without coming to any decision at all. Hence they require to be urged and pressed upon the subject. It is necessary that parents and religious friends should say to them, and that again and again, Wherefore "choose you this day whom ye will serve."

Nor can we wonder at this when we consider that they are naturally averse to that which is right, and

prone to that which is wrong. "All we, like sheep, have gone astray." Our Lord gives us to understand that when a sheep is lost in the wilderness, it is necessary for the shepherd to follow it up and down; and only by vigorous and persevering efforts can he finally lay it on his shoulders, and bring it home, rejoicing.

In this respect young people are like the unjust judge, when he was unwilling to listen to the injured widow who claimed his protection. He hesitated, because there was something morally wrong in his heart. We are told that he "feared not God, neither regarded man." Young people among ourselves are not so bad as he was; for they are not equally blinded and hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Yet, because they have a carnal mind, and a nature which is morally wrong, they are unwilling to come to a right decision, and have need to be urged and entreated, again and again, to take Christ for their Master, and submit themselves unto God.

A person who goes to young people and entreats them to "choose" whom they will serve, is often a very unwelcome visitor. He is not unfrequently treated like the man who applied to his friend at midnight for the loan of some bread, because a traveller had unexpectedly arrived, and he was in a great difficulty. It was said to him, you remember, "The doors are shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee." So, many young people are settled down in their present circumstances, and do not like to be disturbed by being required to choose the service of God, and to change their course of life. Sick persons need the help of a nurse and a physician; lost travellers are in want of a guide; and all young people require the assistance of their friends in laying a right moral foundation, which is to be for all time, and for all eternity.

III. *It may be difficult to make a right decision in*

early life; but this, if neglected at present, will remain to be done at some future period. It may be truly said, We cannot give children grace; and, therefore, having told them what is right, we must leave them to God. In this way they may possibly grow up in worldliness and sin. But then, if at any future time they are to repent and obtain salvation, they must come to this solemn decision. The prodigal son went into a far country, and there wasted his substance in riotous living. But the only change which was wrought in his condition was simply from bad to worse. When he was at home, he might have chosen to submit to his father, and have remained under his protection, an obedient and a happy child. Now, if he would escape from his want and misery, he must return to the same home, and make up his mind to submit to the same rule. So that nothing is gained by delaying conversion. The business may be put off, and our young people may commit a great deal of sin, and bring upon themselves a great deal of misery; but if they are ever to be saved and to be happy, they must in the end "choose" whom they will serve.

Should the work of conversion be reserved to a sick-bed, and until the approach of death, still, if it ever take place at all, it must be brought about exactly in the same way. The thief upon the cross appears to have pursued his course of violence and robbery till he was arrested and condemned to die. Nay, he seems to have continued in the same temper until he was actually undergoing the dreadful process of crucifixion. But then, in the midst of his excruciating torments, he had to choose whom he would serve. Accordingly, in his extremity he turned to Jesus, and called upon Him for help. If Jesus is to remember you in mercy on a bed of sickness; if He is to receive your departing soul when it leaves the body; if after death you are to be with Him in

paradise;—then you must, even at the close of life, "choose" Him for your Saviour, and submit yourselves unto Him.

Solomon says, "Say not to thy neighbour, Go, and come again, when thou hast it by thee." If your neighbour need your help, and his circumstances are not likely to improve by delay, then talk not about to-morrow, but hasten to help him to-day. When your children are become old in sin, and when they are about to die, in order to be saved they will have to do just what they should do to-day. "What man shall there be among you," says our Lord to His hearers, "that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out?" These men knew that in such a case the circumstances of the animal would not improve by being left until the morrow. They knew, too, that possibly it might die in the mean time; and hence they hastened to lift it out, even on the sabbath day. Our Lord said in reference to this case, "How much then is a man better than a sheep?" and surely it is of more importance to put a soul in the way to heaven than to save a merely animal life. Therefore we should hasten, without further delay, to press and urge our children to "choose" this day whom they will serve.

IV. Our last observation is, that *there is a principle in human nature which is highly favourable to all efforts of this kind.* It is very true that "the heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked," and that we are altogether "as an unclean thing." Still, it is an undoubted matter of fact—explain it as we may—that every man, however wicked, instinctively feels the difference between right and wrong. There is in the nature of every human being what some people have called "natural conscience," others, "the light within," and others, "the free gift, which has come upon all men." Whatever we

choose to call it, the thing is notoriously there; and whenever we speak for God and religion, it responds to what we say, and tells the sinner that he ought to submit to the gracious authority of Christ.

There is a very great difference in natural temperament in the children by whom we are surrounded; but in every boy and in every girl a *conscience* will be found. Some hearts will be gently opened to receive the Gospel, "not as the word of man, but, as it is in truth, the word of God." In others, conscience will make an opening for the arrows of God to enter, as through the joints of the harness; they will be wounded in spirit, and roar on account of the disquietude of their soul. It is possible that the conduct of some may be so outrageous and bad, tha we think it useless to speak to them any more on the subject of religion. Still, it may be well to ask them what they mean to do. Even Judas had a conscience.

When you speak to young people on the subject of religion, be assured that God is with you, and therefore your labour is not likely to be in vain. In the next place, be assured that the conscience within is your friend, and is already telling them to listen to your words. Gideon, with his little army, had but small hopes of subduing the Midianites, when he saw them spread over the country "as grasshoppers for multitude." But he and his men were mightily encouraged when they heard the dream of one of the soldiers, and found that they were expecting to be conquered, and were already prepared to submit. Whether your unconverted children have had any similar dreams or not, depend upon it, conscience has already told them that they are fighting against God, and that it is their wisdom and their interest to submit. Jesus could not speak to Peter in the hall of the high priest. He merely "looked" at him, and conscience did the rest. Conscience understands your looks.

XIII.

THE SERPENT'S HEAD BRUISED.

God, having created the first man, and placed him in paradise, said to him, "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat; but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat." Man admitted freely the *right* of his Maker to give this command; but "the serpent said unto the woman, ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." Adam believed this misrepresentation, and concluded that although God had an undoubted right to issue this command, yet to disobey it would be the most to his own advantage; and accordingly he violated, instead of observing this law. This is the common principle of sin. Transgressors seldom question the authority of their Maker; but yet doubt of His wisdom or kindness. All young people are therefore to be solemnly asked whether they are persuaded that obedience to God is both their *duty* and *interest;* and therefore intend to keep His commandments.

That men generally should be brought to make this acknowledgment was foretold by God in judging the serpent. The words of the great Judge of all the earth are, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." These words, as commonly explained, received their fulfilment in Christ; and undoubtedly their primary sense and application is to Him and His redeeming work. But, in a secondary and subordinate sense, they have some relation to the numerous posterity of

Adam. Although the serpent had persuaded the father to credit his falsehood, and had thereby gained a present advantage ; yet the time would come when the children of these parents would gain a far greater advantage over the serpent. They would be abundantly convinced that he was "a liar from the beginning;" that God is not merely the highest, but the *wisest* and *best* of beings ; that His commands are not only "just," but eminently "good ;" and that for a creature to submit to his Creator is not only right, but the very best thing he can do for himself. The "old serpent" should be generally scouted as a notorious liar ; be universally regarded with contempt ; and be utterly unable to gain the smallest credit, even among those who had believed him for a time.

XIV.

A RELIGIOUS PURPOSE.

"Depart from me, ye evil doers: for I will keep the commandments of my God."—Psalm cxix. 115.

St. Peter says to his readers, "What shall the *end* be of them that obey not the Gospel of God?" This is a question we are unable fully to answer. Nor are we able to tell you what will be the end of those who obey the Gospel, and become the subjects of its gracious power. Our adorable Master has indeed said, "Where I am, there shall also My servants be," "that they may behold My glory;" but what that glory is, no tongue can tell, no mind can imagine. "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day;" but the brightness of that day is something which "passeth all understanding." We are told that "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;" but that is a blessedness which is not only "abundantly above all that we ask or think;" it is more, it is "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

But if we are unable fully to describe the end of a religious course, we know something more about its beginning. It all proceeds from a good thought; the root of it all is a religious purpose formed in the mind. A holy life, and a happy eternity, are but the stream which flows from such a resolution as that expressed in the text. Every member of the present congregation—the oldest and the youngest—may now say, "Depart from me, ye evil doers: for I will keep the commandments of my God." This may be done

during the present assembly; if it has not been done already. If any of you have been hindered in religion by any worldly companions, you may to-night have done with them for ever, and begin from this hour to walk before God in holiness and righteousness.

I. Yet it is proper to say that any of you who may form this resolution are likely to be involved in a severe and difficult contest. Such a soul is like Peter, when he desired permission to throw himself into the sea, and go to Jesus. No sooner did he begin to walk upon the water than he found himself struggling with difficulties, and exposed to dangers, of which he was not previously aware. Looking at the rising waves, and listening to the roaring wind, he forgot his dependence on his Master, and neglected to look to Him for help. He therefore began to sink, and was obliged to cry to Jesus for succour and deliverance. St. Paul speaks of a man who, it seems, had resolved to enter upon a holy life, but found himself grappling with difficulties, which appeared insurmountable. He said, "To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not." "I have indeed made a right choice, and a vigorous attempt accordingly; but am opposed, and utterly unable to carry out my design. 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?'" Yet, in the depth of his distress, he sees deliverance in the distance, rejoices in hope, and exclaims, "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord!" When the children of Israel were in Egypt, they cried unto the Lord, and desired to be brought out of the house of their bondage. But they soon found themselves surrounded by difficulties and dangers, of the most formidable kind. The Egyptians were behind, and the Red sea before them. They cried unto Moses, and trembled for themselves. But the sea divided; they went through as on dry land; and when Pharaoh's army pursued them, the waters

closed again, and overwhelmed them all. The Israelites saw the salvation of God; and, on the opposite shore, were enabled to sing of His power and His grace.

So the man, or the youth, who says, "Depart from me, ye evil doers; for I will keep the commandments of my God," finds himself at once opposed by all the forces of fallen nature. He is plunged, as it were, headlong into the thick and centre of a battle; and has to struggle for his life. But man's extremity is God's opportunity. Our repentance is incomplete,—our efforts baffled and unsuccessful,—our very faith weak and unable to remove the mountain; but "the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." He considers, not our performances, but our wills and intentions; and "according to His mercy" He saves us. Such persons are authorized, every day and every hour, to expect the love of God to be shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto them. They are endued with power from on high; and struggle through all their difficulties into "the glorious liberty of the children of God."

II. In all the professors of religion God expects and requires such a purpose as this. All who attend His ordinances, and observe the appointed forms of public worship, are commanded to practise moral duties. While they frequent religious assemblies, and give unto the Lord the glory due unto His name, they are commanded to "cease to do evil," and "learn to do well." If they merely listen to the reading of the Scriptures, or to the delivery of sermons, and never say,—at least in their hearts,—"I will keep the commandments of my God," they are among those who hear Christ's sayings, but do them not; and who are likened to "a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand." However often we go up to the temple to pray; and, when there,

whether we recount our good deeds with the Pharisee, or lament our sins with the publican,—if we are without a purpose of heart to keep the commandments of God, we shall never return to our houses justified. God exercised great forbearance towards sinful man when He said of him, before the flood, "Yet his days shall be a hundred and twenty years." It is true, at that time "all flesh had corrupted his way," and "the earth was filled with violence;" yet, if, during that long interval, any of these wicked people had said in his heart, "Depart from me, ye evil doers: for I will keep the commandments of my God," he would have been pardoned and saved. But no such principle was found within them; accordingly, the flood came, and all were destroyed, except Noah, and those that were with him in the ark. We may frequent religious assemblies for years; but, notwithstanding all the hymns we may sing, the prayers we may offer, and the sermons we may hear, if God do not find in our hearts such a purpose as that avowed in the text, we leave Him no alternative but to appoint us our portion with the unbelievers.

III. It is scarcely necessary to say that the course of conduct here indicated is that which you know to be RIGHT. Every man's conscience bears him witness that there are some things which are right, and others which are wrong. Whether it is right to obey God rather than man, is a point which conscience can easily decide. When various peoples, nations, and languages heard the sound of the music, and fell down to worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up, would it have been *right* if Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego had united with this multitude, and worshipped, as a god, an immense figure which had been made by a man? You know that these three noble Hebrews did perfectly right when they said, by their conduct, "Depart from us, ye evil doers: for we will keep the commandments of our God;" and were

resolved, in opposition to Nebuchadnezzar, and the vast empire over which he reigned, to worship only the one living and true Jehovah. Idolaters in the city of Ephesus, on a memorable occasion, assembled in prodigious numbers, and in a state of frenzy exclaimed, for the space of two hours, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." Even the town-clerk talked about the goddess whose image fell down from Jupiter, and seemed to regard her worship as very befitting the inhabitants of that city. But Paul and his converts had no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. They said,—and you know that they did right when they said,—"Depart from us, ye evil doers: for we will keep the commandments of our God." You are not placed exactly in their circumstances, but you may act on the same principle; and that, you know, would be perfectly right. He who made us should govern us, and we should constantly seek to do those things which are pleasing in His sight. Were you asked, individually, you would say that the psalmist did perfectly right when he uttered the words of our text. Saul of Tarsus also did right when he said to Jesus, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" for Christ is "the Author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him;" and it is perfectly just that we should be ruled by Him, when "there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved."

As you know it to be decidedly right to form this resolution, so you know that to be without such a purpose, and to go on living to the world and yourselves, is palpably *wrong*. Judas Iscariot knew he was doing wrong when he sold his Master for thirty pieces of silver. Conscience continued to charge him with this act of wickedness; and at length its stings and accusations became so terrible that he could endure them no longer; and he threw down the money at the feet of his employers, and went out and put an end to his

life. It is your wisdom not to enter into such a conflict with your conscience, but to respect its decisions, and to say, "Depart from me, ye evil doers: for I will keep the commandments of my God."

IV. Until this is done, all our religious knowledge is ineffective and useless. We may be acquainted with all the facts and principles contained in the Bible. It may be quite easy for us at any time to state the leading events in the sacred history; and to unfold all the system of doctrine revealed in the Gospel. But evangelical teaching is intended to lead to a holy life. We know these things in order that we may do them. If your information has resulted in no principle,—if it has led to no purpose,—if it has never induced you to say, "Depart from me, ye evil doers: for I will keep the commandments of my God,"—it is plain that although you have attended sermons and read the Bible for years, you have been "hearers only," and so "deceiving your own selves."

V. According to the Bible, the true principle of all religion and morality is the love of God and the love of man. "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." As the leaves, the blossoms, and the fruit of a tree, all depend upon the root; so all the parts of a holy life are produced by the principle of love planted in the human heart. It is required that this principle should exist in such vigour and maturity that we love the Lord with all our "heart." In early life we have often more heart than mind; passion is strong, while the reason remains but feeble. But the character of God is infinitely amiable, and even children may love Him with an entire affection, and need not wait for the attainment of a larger knowledge, and a fuller development of the understanding. We are to love God with all our "soul," or with all our

animal life. Young persons are apt to suppose that it is at present too soon for them to think of being religious; and that they may safely postpone the serious consideration of the subject until they are further advanced in years. But such is the character of God, and such the extent of our obligations, that love to Him ought to constrain us to devote our entire life, our youth and our old age, to His honour and service. The law of God, too, requires that we love Him with all our "mind." Whatever may be our attainments in knowledge; whatever may be the keenness of our sagacity; whatever we may become, either as scholars or as philosophers;—all our enlarged powers should be subjected to the will, and laid at the feet of our Creator and Redeemer. We are also called upon to love the Lord with all our "strength." Our powers may be invigorated by study and experience,—we may be placed in commanding situations, and our opportunities of usefulness may prove exceedingly abundant, above all that we ever anticipated;—but love to God should constrain us to employ all in fulfilling His wise and gracious designs.

But then it is evident that to whatever heights this love may raise us, and to whatever lengths of piety it may incline us to run, it all begins in a simple act of the will. When, indeed, the will has decided, the mind speedily purposes; and the tongue hastens to avow what has been inwardly done. Love is essentially spontaneous. It is the flowing out of the soul. While it begins in an act of the will, in a simple choice and purpose, it proceeds like the letting out of water; and runs on, with increasing volume and impetuosity, until it carries all away by its resistless energy. When once the will has decided, and the heart has made its choice, we shall soon be prepared to engage by promise, and be heard to say, "Depart from me, ye evil doers; for I will keep the commandments of my God."

VI. Promises, indeed, such as this, cannot satisfy wise and thoughtful men, unless they are accompanied by suitable *guarantees*. Young people often promise to lead a religious life; and yet fail to perform what at one time they undoubtedly intended. Buds and blossoms, which once filled us with hope, are nipped by the frosts of temptation, and all end in disappointment. Adult sinners, in times of sickness, are often loud in promising a reformation of their lives, if they are only allowed to get well again. But when health returns, it is not unfrequently found that their goodness proves as "a morning cloud, and as the early dew."

Whenever, therefore, young people—or old people—are disposed to say, "Depart from me, ye evil doers: for I will keep the commandments of my God," they should be prepared to accompany that promise, with such *guarantees* as are suited to the circumstances of their case. You will not be offended because it is required that when you make a promise you will also give some security for its performance. Why, men have not been ashamed to ask for such guarantees, even from the blessed God Himself, although it has been said that He "cannot lie." When the Lord said to Abraham that He would, some centuries hence, give the land of Canaan to his descendants, that patriarch immediately asked for some present security for the ultimate fulfilment of that promise. He said, "Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?" By a sign given on that very day, Abraham was assured that, in due time, the word of God should be fulfilled in all its extent. Again, the three great Jewish patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, believed themselves, and wished their children to believe, that, although many changes might take place in the mean time, the land of Canaan should finally become their inheritance, according to the promise of God. But they did not wish them to

believe without evidence; and accordingly guaranteed the fulfilment of their word. That guarantee was the purchase of the cave of Machpelah for a burying-place; and the appointment of their bodies to be laid there, from one generation to another. "There," said Jacob to his sons," they buried Abraham and Sarah; there they buried Isaac and Rebekah; there I buried Leah; and there I wish to be buried myself." These venerable men, by thus laying their bones in the promised land, assured their posterity that it should become their home and their property at the appointed time. We wish you, my friends, and especially the younger members of this congregation, now to purpose in your own minds that you will, in all future time, submit yourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ; and then give such security for the fulfilment of this purpose as you can very well afford. Say, "Depart from me, ye evil doers: for I will keep the commandments of my God;" and then guarantee this promise by going, as soon as possible, to some class-meeting, and joining the Methodist Society. Such a promise, and such a guarantee, will be likely soon to end in your being "washed, and sanctified, and justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

VII. Whenever we are invited to adopt this resolution, we seem brought very near to the salvation of the Gospel. Our Lord said to one, in the days of His flesh, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." The same may now be said of every member of the present congregation. When people are assembled in the Lord's house, and listening to the sound of salvation, they are just on the point of touching the hem of the Redeemer's garment, and being healed of all their spiritual maladies. Like the woman of Canaan, when pleading with Jesus, they stand on the verge of victory and success. Christ, indeed, may seem to treat them with

indifference; but He is just ready to say, "Great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

How very near to salvation were the sons-in-law of Lot, when their father apprized them of God's intention to destroy Sodom, and urged them forthwith to flee from the city. A simple purpose would have saved their lives, and sheltered them from all the ruin in which they were finally involved. Had they but just made up their minds to leave at once, they had escaped all that terrible shower of fire which finally destroyed them. But "he seemed to them as one that mocked;" and they trifled and disbelieved, until it was for ever too late. You, my young friends, are at this moment just as near to spiritual salvation. By just resolving to forsake sin,—by simply saying, "Depart from me, ye evil doers: for I will keep the commandments of my God;" you may save your souls alive, gain the city of refuge, and lay hold on the hope set before you.

It is very distressing when any one fails of the grace of God. But it is doubly distressing to see a man come so near to personal salvation as to touch it with his hand, and yet fail of its actual attainment. When Jesus beheld the young ruler mentioned in the Gospels, He loved him for his many amiable qualities, and the desire he evinced for the possession of eternal life in heaven. He had been educated with great care and attention. In his own opinion, at least, he had kept the commandments of God from his youth up. Now he came running with haste to Christ, kneeling down with all humility, and asking, with inexpressible concern, "Good Master, what shall I do, that I may inherit eternal life?" He was now within reach of all that he had desired and sought. A single resolution, a simple purpose to leave all and follow Christ, would have put him in possession of all that God had to give, and he had been rendered unspeakably

happy for ever. All this he saw with his eye; but it never became his own. He touched it with his finger; but he never seized it with his hand. "He went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions." My brethren, you are even nearer to salvation than this young man was. You are not requested to part with your property in order to save your souls. It is not necessary to make yourselves poor in order to have your sins forgiven, and to be hallowed and made meet for heaven. You have only to do what your conscience tells you is perfectly right, and what you cannot neglect without feeling you are guilty and miserable; and all the blessings of salvation will become yours for ever.

Is it not a great thing to have a hope of heaven? Is it not very desirable that when you fail on earth an entrance should be ministered unto you abundantly into that everlasting kingdom? Is it not the desire of your heart that in the great day of account the Judge of all the earth should say to you, "Come, ye blessed of my Father?" Now, that of which all this is the glorious issue and conclusion may have its beginning in this place, and in this very hour. The seed, indeed, which produces this glorious tree, may be as a grain of mustard seed, and seem the smallest and most unpromising of all the seeds that be put into the earth; but it may be planted on this very day; and grow into a holy life, and bear all the fruits of glory, honour, and immortality. That seed is planted as soon as you have said, "Depart from me, ye evil doers: for I will keep the commandments of my God."

XV.

SUBMISSION TO CHRIST.

"Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

This act of submission to Christ is sure to be followed by many others which are acceptable to God, and profitable to ourselves. We all have moral perceptions, and understand the difference between right and wrong; but we have many temptations which hinder and obstruct us in the course of duty. For instance, we all know it is right to speak the truth, and wrong to tell a lie; but then it often happens that falsehood may be a great present advantage, while truth may subject us to a great present loss. When one of the early Christians was brought into a heathen court, if he did any thing which practically denied his Christianity, he told a lie,—but he saved his life: if he confessed his Christianity, he told the truth,—but he was condemned to die. What we need, therefore, is not merely to know the difference between right and wrong, but to possess some powerful motive which, like a mighty torrent, will enable us to surmount all these temptations, carry us over all these hindrances, and bear us onward in a course of truth and righteousness.

Without such a mighty and all-impelling motive, man, morally considered, is but as a machine without any moving power; for although he may say, "To will is present with me," he will be obliged to add, "How to perform that which is good I find not." He may condemn the wrong, but will still the wrong pursue. But submission to Christ will supply him with a mighty motive which will urge him continually

to every good word and work. When he feels himself a servant of Christ, he will be roused to walk worthy of his high vocation; and will be "strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man." Paul was several times staggered and discouraged at the formidable difficulties which awaited him; but when he remembered that he was a servant of Christ, and especially when he obtained a sight of his Master, he determined to persevere in the work to which he had been appointed. On one occasion, in the city of Corinth, he was much discouraged and depressed; but his Master appeared to him in a vision of the night, telling him to speak and spare not, and assuring him that no man should hurt him. This so cheered and strengthened him, that he continued preaching there for a year and six months; and many people were converted and saved. Many years afterwards, when brought before the emperor Nero at Rome,—when dangers seemed to thicken around him,—when he was forsaken by all his friends,—the Lord his Master, he tells us, "stood with" him, and "strengthened" him. By this means he was enabled to endure unto the end, and at the close of life to say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."

Submit to Christ, and that will be to you the beginning of a holy and perpetual motion.

XVI

"BY GRACE ARE YE SAVED THROUGH FAITH."

The moral and spiritual salvation of sinful man is essentially the work of God; hence all the honour and all the glory of this great achievement is due to Him alone. The salvation of sinners is as exclusively the work of God as was the original creation of the material universe. At that time there were none of the race of Adam in existence, and therefore they could afford Him no assistance. There were, indeed, the angels, who are called "the sons of God;" but all they could do was to "sing together," and "shout for joy," at this wonderful display of Divine wisdom, power, and goodness. "He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast;" and, to this day, "the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handywork." The redemption of a fallen world is called a new creation; and all saved sinners will remain for ever monuments of His mercy, and "to the glory of His grace."

Yet this one great work of God is divided into two parts; namely,—that in which He acts by Himself alone, and that in which He waits for the concurrence, and seeks for the co-operation of His creatures. Sinners are saved solely by the "grace" of God, and yet it is through the exercise of their own "faith."

In some parts of the work of human salvation God acts independently and alone. It was altogether with Himself that the great redeeming scheme originated, and that the first promise was given. When man had

sinned, by eating the forbidden fruit, it was God alone who devised the way of salvation through a crucified Redeemer, saying, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent." There was no acknowledgment of guilt on the part of the offenders, nor any expression of desire for mercy,—they were so busy in criminating one another. It was merely the good pleasure of the Divine goodness that spared condemned man, and gave him hope of redemption in the blood of Christ, "even the forgiveness of sin." "When the fulness of time was come," the promised Saviour made His appearance. This was the sole act of God Himself, without the concurrence of any of His creatures. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." It was entirely independent of man that the Gospel revelation was given to the world. It was only "the Lord" who originally "gave the word;" and "great was the company of those that published it." Neither in whole nor in part was this the word of man; it was simply the word of God. It was the end of the night of ignorance and sin, and the dawning of a celestial day.

The coming of the Holy Ghost was another act of the pure and simple "grace" of God. It is true we read of a hundred and twenty disciples, in the upper room at Jerusalem, who continued "in prayer and supplication." When the day of Pentecost was fully come, "they were all with one accord in one place," praying and waiting for the baptism of fire. But all this was an act of simple obedience to the command of Christ, and of faith in His promise. Our blessed Saviour has represented Himself and His gracious arrangements under the notion of a nobleman who was about to take a journey, and who, before his departure, sent for his servants, and divided his property among them. "Unto one he gave five talents,

to another two, and to another one." This distribution was not, either in whole or in part, the act of the servants; but was entirely the work of the Master. All this shows us that God, in preparing the blessings of the Gospel salvation, does not seek the concurrence of His creatures; but that an exclusive agency is denoted when it is said, "By grace are ye saved."

But if God acts in this manner in some parts of the business of human salvation, in other parts His work proceeds on a different principle. God, we are told, "worketh all things after the counsel of His own will." At times, He works without regard to any being but Himself: then He pauses, and proceeds no further, until He has obtained the co-operation of His creatures. "By grace are ye saved *through faith*." God has given His commands without asking our leave; but, having done that, He proceeds no further till we obey Him. There "are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises;" but they will never be realized in our experience until they are heartily accepted.

The word "faith" has a variety of meanings; but, while it always denotes an act of man, it always has relation to the word of God. God speaks, and faith gives credit to what He says. God commands, and faith obeys. God offers, and faith accepts. In general, our faith is more or less vigorous and efficient in proportion to the degree of our acquaintance with the Divine character. The more vivid and correct are our views of the character of God, and the more fully shall we believe to the saving of the soul. Many things are taught us by man; but when we begin to listen to the voice of God, and our attention is fixed upon Him, then at His bidding we pass "from death unto life," and are "hallowed, and made meet for heaven." It is not the best scholars, or the most intelligent people, that are the most holy and happy; but those who pay the most attention to the voice of God, speaking to

them by His word and by His Spirit; for He speaks them into liberty and salvation. "By grace are ye saved through faith." "My sheep hear My voice, . . . and I give unto them eternal life."

Unbelief resists the purposes and frustrates the grace of God. It is like the notorious murmuring of the children of Israel, when they refused to take possession of the promised land. Hundreds of years before, God had said to Abraham, "Arise, walk through the land, in the length of it, and in the breadth of it;" for "to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever." It was in order to give them Canaan for a possession that He had led them out of Egypt, brought them through the Red sea, and fed them with manna in the wilderness. When He had conducted them to the very borders of this goodly land, and His long-cherished design was on the point of being realized;—then they declared the conquest of the country to be impossible, and "in their hearts turned back into Egypt." Such conduct, under such circumstances, was very provoking; and it is no wonder that God should swear in His wrath, that they should not enter into the rest He had prepared for them.

No less offensive to Him was the notorious conduct of Ananias and Sapphira. Christ had just sent down upon the infant Christian church the gift of the Holy Ghost. The multitude of them that believed had just become "of one heart and of one soul," favourites of heaven and earth, "praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." God had sent His Son to suffer and to die; He had collected a body of people with immense toil and expense; and was now about to exhibit the Christian church in all her moral beauty. She was to appear before the world, "fair as the sun, clear as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners." Mankind were to see what glorious

characters could be raised, by the transforming power of the Gospel, out of the unpromising materials of human nature. This magnificent design was likely to be obscured and destroyed by the grovelling conduct of Ananias and Sapphira. It was in the midst of such scenes as these that they agreed together to sell an estate, to keep back part of the price, and "to lie unto the Holy Ghost." No wonder that they were seized with sudden death, fell down at the feet of the Apostles, and were carried out and committed to the dust. Nor is it any wonder that those who resist the Holy Ghost, who frustrate the designs of infinite wisdom and love by their impenitence and unbelief, should be banished from the presence of the Lord, and consigned to the "blackness of darkness," which is "for ever and ever."

The wonderful things which are said of believers in the Gospel should not be regarded with surprise. Since there was grace enough in God to make the promises, there is nothing unusual in His fulfilling them. When the obstruction is removed, there is a manifestation of the riches of grace, and of the exceeding greatness of the power of God. Then He fulfils in us "all the good pleasure of His goodness, and the work of faith with power."

XVII.

THE DESIGN OF CHRIST.

"And He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them."

In all the Saviour did He had in view that great purpose of His incarnation and death,—the recovery of man from the ruins of his apostasy, and his restoration to a state of moral purity and acceptance with God. In the fifth chapter of Ephesians, the design of the death of Christ is stated in these words: "Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." As this was the great end of the Redeemer's death, so His purpose was to raise these children to this happiness, when He commanded them to come into His presence, took them up in His arms, and blessed them.

I. It appears that the design of all that the Saviour did and suffered was purely *moral*. He sought, as His primary end in all that He passed through, not any merely social, or political, or intellectual advantage; but one of an essentially moral character. It is true that present and temporal benefits will flow from the fulfilment of the design of redemption; but still the design itself relates to matters which are purely moral.

Some parties talk as if it was the end of the Gospel to raise men in the social scale; as if they were to be enlightened and converted, in order that the poor might be made rich, servants become masters, and

all rise in social position, and be placed in more easy and elevated circumstances. Others seem to contemplate a political end of the religion of Christ. When Christianity has made a man intelligent and virtuous, he will be qualified to exercise the elective franchise, or even come to be chosen himself a member of Parliament. There is a third party who speak of an intellectual end which the Gospel is to attain. They say that when a man becomes a true Christian, he will be thoughtful and studious; and that the tendency of this is to render him intelligent; and, it may be, to raise him into a scholar or a philosopher.

But the end of Christ is essentially *moral*. These are subordinate blessings which He bestows; His main design is to present unto Himself a glorious and spotless church. The priest and Levite who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho knew that there was a man by the way-side in pitiable and dying circumstances, and that they ought to stop and relieve him. But they considered, again, that this would greatly hinder them in their journey, and in many ways was likely to prove a serious inconvenience. So they merely "came and looked upon him;" but "passed by on the other side," and left him without help. Now this conduct was a "spot" of selfishness, the "wrinkle" of a hard heart, which appeared upon the face of their moral character. But when the good Samaritan came, he pursued a different course, and evinced a nobler spirit. When Jesus Christ saves a man from sin, His design is to bring him to love his neighbour as himself; and to exemplify that spirit in all his deportment. The entire community of such people will at last be presented to Him, "a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."

While our blessed Saviour seeks to make men moral, so it is to the practice of a *universal* morality that He intends to bring them. At present we hear much

of a morality which refers to men only, and leaves God entirely out of the question. People are sometimes careful about the duties which they owe to their fellow-creatures, while their Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier is treated with indifference and neglect. But this is a partial morality; and a very different thing from that which is contemplated by Christ. So far as appears from the history of Aaron, he was a very moral man in reference to his fellow-creatures; but he offered a gross and gratuitous insult to his Maker, when he made a golden calf, and commanded the people to worship it; saying, "These be thy gods, O Israel, that brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." Among ourselves there are persons who are very careful to pay their debts, and would not, on any account, injure any body by word or deed; but, while respecting the rights of men, they are careless of the rights of God. Though they have sinned against Him with a high hand; yet they never repented of their sin, saying, "What have I done?" never fell at His feet and sought His forgiveness. There are people who are polite and well-behaved, not merely to kings and magistrates, but to the meanest person with whom they have to do; yet they have no respect for their Preserver and Benefactor, and live "without God in the world." All this is a very partial and defective morality. It contemplates our duties towards men; but ignores and disregards our duties towards God. Something very superior to this was contemplated by our Saviour when He hung upon the cross, and when He took up little children in His arms, and blessed them. Sinners are saved by grace, that they may love the Lord their God with all their heart, as well as their neighbour as themselves. This is what the Redeemer aims to accomplish, when He seeks to present unto Himself "a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."

In all that our Redeemer did and suffered, He

sought to raise men to the enjoyment of a *perpetual* morality. There is another world after this; and we shall have to die as certainly as we now live. That morality, therefore, which is merely recognized in this world, but is not acknowledged in the next, may benefit man in the embodied, but will be of no use to him in the disembodied state. When men die, they do not lose all consciousness and activity. After death comes the judgment;—when their moral character is examined by "the Judge of all the earth," and each is rewarded "according to his works." True morality is immortal in its duration, and fits a man for the society of separate spirits, as well as for that of the dwellers upon earth. Christ intends in the next world to present the church unto Himself, "not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." Morally speaking, angels are always healthy, always young, and always fair. Those who love God with all their heart, and their neighbour as themselves, shall be admitted into their society, and behold the glory of the Lord. They are fitted for the employments of heaven.

Christ's end in all that He did was to raise men to a morality which is connected with *perfect happiness.* Jude speaks of the saints being presented "faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." If we are found "faultless" when we come to stand before the Judge of all the earth, that circumstance will be the cause of universal joy. Christ will then realize "the joy that was set before Him" when He "endured the cross, despising the shame." Angels will rejoice when they see another sinner who has washed his robes, "and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." All heaven will exult when they see a creature "born in sin," who has risen by the power of the Saviour's grace, until he is presented to Christ a member of "a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." What then will the believer himself feel when he hears his adorable Judge

and Master saying, "Well done, good and faithful servant?" This will not merely be joy, but "exceeding joy." It will exceed all that he ever felt or imagined. It will be nothing less than heaven itself, and lasting as eternity. This was the end at which the Saviour aimed when He died upon the cross. This was the blessedness He meant these children to attain, when "He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them."

II. How did the Saviour intend to realize His gracious intention, and actually to bring these children to this purity and blessedness? It appears, from the passage already quoted, that this He intends to effect through the medium of His *church*. When men become members of His church, by believing in His name, they are sanctified and cleansed from sin, preparatory to their being finally presented to Himself. The church, we have been told, is "a congregation of faithful men, among whom the word of God is preached, and the sacraments duly administered." God has constituted children members of His church. This, at least, will not be denied by the friends of infant baptism. As the children of the Jews were formerly admitted into the church by circumcision, so children are now admitted into the same church by baptism. At present the members of the church are in a state of moral transition. At first they were polluted by original and by actual sin; but when they believed in Christ He proceeded to sanctify and cleanse them: finally, and at last, He will present them without spot to Himself. All who are connected with this body of people are to be partakers of its moral advancement. The man who gets into a crowd must move along with the multitude. Whoever goes to reside in a community must learn its language, and conform to its customs; and to this he will be almost imperceptibly led. So when children are admitted into the congregation of Christ's church, He means

them to enter upon a state of moral transition, and to be changed "from glory into glory;" until at last they are presented to Him, "not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."

So far as Christ Himself is concerned, this design, vast as it is, He is both able and willing to fulfil. When He took up children in His arms, and blessed them, He had counted the cost of their eternal salvation. He well knew that however innocent and docile they might then appear, free-will would begin to stir in them, when they would probably shew themselves perverse and disobedient. He foresaw the follies of youth, the dangers of riper years, and the infirmities of old age. Yet when He blessed them, He there and then began a good work, and at the same time undertook to perform it unto the day of His coming.

It is true that the designs of Christ are not absolute, but conditional; and are not always infallibly fulfilled. He recognizes the freedom of the human will; and rather than employ any coercion, submits to be resisted, and consents to sustain a defeat. Christ admits children into His church, shews Himself their Friend, and invites them to remain in it, until, together with it, they are made glorious, "not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." But His arrangements are often set aside by parties from whom such opposition was the least to be expected. Young people themselves, after being admitted into His church, are often unwilling to continue in it. Many who have been baptized and brought up in connexion with Methodism cannot be induced to join the Society. They are afraid to meet in class, and think it would be very rash and improper to take such a step as that. But all that is to be anticipated from such a course would be, that they would get into the middle of the stream, and be carried by the current towards holiness and a meetness for heaven. At other times it happens that

while young people are willing to be members of the church, the church herself hesitates to acknowledge them. "True," it is said, "they have been baptized; but are not prepared to join the Society. They ought not at present to meet in class, as they have no proper desire to flee from the wrath to come. It will be far better for them to stand aloof, lest they should bring some dishonour upon the name and cause of the Redeemer."

This is just to act upon the principle of the people of Israel when they refused to enter the land of Canaan, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt. It was God's gracious intention to lead them straight from the house of bondage into the possession of the promised land. But the people listened to the report of the spies; talked incessantly of the tall sons of Anak, and of the cities walled up to heaven; declared that conquest was impossible; and refused to make the attempt. God, therefore, was displeased, sware in His wrath that they should not enter into His rest, and condemned them to wander and perish in the wilderness. In like manner, we have followed the devices and desires of our own heart, and done our own will rather than that of our Father who is in heaven. The consequences of this conduct are everywhere to be seen; and they are of the most melancholy kind. Thousands of young persons, the children of pious parents, or brought up in Methodist schools, are walking according to the course of the present evil world. There are millions of people in the country who seldom or never attend any place of worship; Christians in name, but heathens in practice,—not indeed idolators, but persons living without God in the world.

When Jesus received and blessed little children, He laid down the doctrine that sinners of all ages were to be saved on one principle; and said to adults, "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God

as a little child, he shall not enter therein." It is the purpose of God to save us freely by His grace; and if only we do not oppose Him, but follow His arrangements, He will fulfil in us all the good pleasure of His goodness.

You, my young friends, were introduced into the church at baptism, by God Himself; and He advises you to become members of that church by your own free and voluntary consent, and to continue connected with it until His gracious designs are fulfilled in your perfect purity and blessedness. He does not indeed expect this great result to be brought about without the use of special and appropriate means. Whatever sect or denomination you may prefer, if you are connected with the church of Christ at all, suitable means will be employed to gain your consent to be His willing servants. If you wish to be connected with any other branch of the church, you will be formally and solemnly asked whether you freely engage to become the servants of Christ, to keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of your life. If you choose to be Methodists, you will be expected to meet in class; and the leader will kindly converse with you, from week to week, endeavouring to guide your feet into the way of peace, and exhorting you to "continue in the faith." In this way Christ will keep you from falling, and will present you, at last, "faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy."

XVIII.

MORAL DEVELOPMENT IN CHILDREN.

"For He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments."—Ps. lxxviii. 5-7.

1. Our text speaks of moral development in children. The writer of this Psalm speaks of "the generation to come,"—"the children which should be born;" and is manifestly thinking of human beings still in the morning of life, and in the state of childhood.

It is equally plain that the inspired writer is here speaking of a *development* of some sort. Just as in vegetation the seed opens, and the blade makes its appearance, and that again grows into a stalk, and bears fruit; so the work here described has a very small beginning, but a large and considerable conclusion.

Nor is it less manifest that this is a great *moral* development. The Psalmist at once contemplates lessons given to children, and men and women setting their hope in God, and keeping His commandments. So that we here see the knowledge and feelings of a child unfolding themselves in a devout and holy life. All this is manifestly not a physical, or merely intellectual, but a *moral* process.

2. Yet while this work is comparatively small in its beginnings, and much larger in its conclusion, both its ends are perfectly alike in kind and nature.

God did not establish it as "a testimony in Jacob," or appoint it as "a law in Israel," that Jewish fathers should simply teach their children to read even the Bible. It was not His intention that these young people should be merely made acquainted with the facts of the national history. That might expand their intellect, increase their knowledge, and render them more intelligent; but could never become practical religion, or lead them to "set their hope in God," and "keep His commandments." So when it is directed that Christian children be brought up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," it is not meant that they are to be barely taught to read the Bible, and be made acquainted with the principles of Christianity. They may acquire such knowledge as this; but if they gain nothing beside, it is not likely they will ever become truly religious. Bare knowledge will no more grow into religion than tares will develope themselves into wheat. When God "established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel," which He commanded the fathers to teach their children, He made an appeal to the *wills* and *consciences* of "the generation to come," and asked them voluntarily to submit to their Maker's authority, and accept the gracious offers He had made. If our children not merely hear or read about Christ, but willingly submit themselves unto Him, acknowledge Him as their Master, and consent to be His servants,—the end of such a beginning will be holiness and heaven; for Christ is become "the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him." Mere knowledge may lead to some sort of intellectual distinction and eminence; but the consent of the *will* to be the servant of Christ will lead children to "set their hope in God," and "keep His commandments."

3. It may be objected to this,—"What importance can be attached to the acts of children? Many

scholars in a Sunday-school, when talked with about religion, have seemingly agreed to all that was said; and sanguine hopes were entertained concerning them. But these hopes were followed by disappointment; for they proved to be fickle and thoughtless, and their goodness, like 'the early dew,' soon vanished away."

It should, however, be remembered that the religion of children is a work that had its beginning in heaven. It was God Himself who "established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers that they should make them known to their children." So that a consent to submit to the authority of Christ is but the child's answer to the call of God, an echo to His voice, and an acceptance of His gracious overtures. Since, therefore, early religion is a process which has God for its Author, and is a movement which began in heaven, there is no telling where or when it will end. He is called "the Almighty God;" and "is able to do for us exceeding abundantly, above all that we ask or think." It is His own word, that to him who improves what he hath "more shall be given, and he shall have abundance;"—but how much more, and in what abundance, no tongue can express, nor mind conceive. Let but a child truly submit to the Lord Jesus Christ, and he then offers no further opposition to the fulfilment of the counsels of grace. He that has begun the good work "will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ." A young person, left alone, would probably "endure but for a time;" but when "kept by the power of God," he is preserved from falling; and is finally presented faultless in the presence of the Divine glory, "with exceeding joy."

4. Against the notion that simple consent in a young person will be developed in actual salvation, other objections may be advanced. It may be said that

strong religious feelings have sometimes been followed by the happiest consequences, while in the absence of such emotions, the best instructions have been, in their results, quite unsatisfactory. There have been revivals in certain places; young people have wept, and then been made very happy; and in that way have been led to join the Society, and become truly religious characters. Where similar movements have not taken place, Sunday-scholars have been well instructed, and promised much; and yet, when they have grown up, and passed into the world, they have become thoroughly earthly-minded persons.

Yet, however people have been affected, after their feelings have subsided, all has been found to depend upon *the consent of the will.* If their choice and purpose have been to "follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth," their subsequent course has been a progress "from glory to glory." If there has been no such choice and resolve, their religion has ended with their feelings; and the revival, in their case, has passed away, and left behind it no permanent results. Religious sorrows and joys are employed to gain the consent of the will; and upon that every thing in morals is made to depend.

As to the cases in which, in the absence of intense religious feeling, simple instruction has had an unfavourable result, it is possible that, while there has been much *teaching*, the actual *consent* of the youth to become the servant of Christ may never have been obtained. In some cases, this has never been so much as asked for; and in others, when sought, it has been in so negligent and unskilful a manner, that, in fact, it has never been given. Where the directions of God were carefully observed, there His designs of grace and mercy have been fulfilled. When children have been so instructed that they saw it but right that their Maker should be their Lawgiver and Ruler, and were led to submit to His righteous and gracious autho-

rity, this principle developed itself by leading them "to set their hope in God," and to "keep His commandments," in their future and mature years.

5. Yet moral development in children has been viewed with distrust; and therefore scarcely ever attempted on a large scale. Even the Methodists, while they have sought, with an almost unbounded faith, the conversion of adults, have done comparatively little in the conversion of children.

On the *post*-development principle we have done a great deal; but on the *pre*-development principle very little indeed. After original sin has been more or less developed in a wicked life, we make great efforts to bring the parties to repentance; but we do far less for children, in whom hereditary depravity is not equally developed, and who have not run to the same excess of riot, because this work is viewed with hesitation and distrust. Wesleyan Methodism has often been called a Missionary church; which is perfectly true, and perfectly right. Both at home and abroad outcasts have been gathered into the fold of Christ, and saved "from sin and Satan's power;" and this is in exact accordance with the mind of Christ; for He "will have all men to be saved." But we have not been equally eminent as a religiously-educating church; for, instead of being the spiritual guides of our children, and directing their feet into the way of peace, thousands of them have been left to follow the devices of their own hearts, and are actually gone with the multitude "to do evil."

6. There have been many complaints, in connection with our Sunday-schools, which we have been long accustomed to hear. Teachers have said that with their labours in the school,—considering the results to which they lead,—they have the utmost reason to be dissatisfied. So long as the children are young and little, they are docile and attentive to their

lessons; and good hopes are felt concerning them. But when they are rising to maturity, and mingle with worldly people, they throw off the restraints of religion, and act just like the rest of mankind.

There are two causes in operation to produce these melancholy effects. Either the right seed has never been sown; or it has not afterwards received due care and attention. In some cases young people have never *consented* to be the subjects of Jesus Christ. They have been taught many things; but have never sincerely and voluntarily bowed to the Redeemer's authority. God offers us salvation, and thereby throws the seed upon the soil of the heart; but until we *receive* it, it lies exposed and bare. When *consent* is obtained, it becomes imbedded in the earth, takes root, and is likely to grow. Simple consent unfolds itself in a religious life; but when a right beginning has never been made, a right conclusion cannot reasonably be expected.

When children have been properly treated in early life, a failure has often afterwards taken place for want of due care and attention. When an awakened adult applies to some Methodist, and inquires, "What must I do to be saved?" he is invariably referred to some leader, and advised to "meet in class." It is always assumed that, unless this is done, the party, however sincere, will ultimately make out but very little in religion. A child at school may feel and speak very properly,—indeed be all that we could wish for,—and yet not be advised to meet in class, nor provided with suitable companions, who will become his true friends, and act as the guardians of his moral and religious principles and habits. In such a world as this, with all its abounding temptations to evil, he is, in that case, very likely to be turned out of the good way, to the right hand or to the left; and all may end in failure and disappointment.

Were young people suitably *examined* and *advised*,

there would be fewer blighted hopes, and less cause for complaint. If proper pains were taken to ascertain that they had personally consented to be the servants of Christ, and were they afterwards directed to suitable companions, cases of moral development would become far more numerous than they are: Sunday-scholars would increase the number of religious adults, and prove our "crown of rejoicing" in the day of the Lord Jesus.

7. While religious people look upon moral development in children with hesitation and distrust, worldly men and sinners are aware of the truth of the principle it involves, and avail themselves of it for the accomplishment of their own purposes.

London thieves know that if boys are taught to pick pockets while they are but children, their evil habits will develope with their years, and they will become expert robbers in due time. Roman Catholics are fully aware that the power of the priesthood depends upon the number of its adherents, and that if human beings are not made Papists in early life, they will probably never become truly such at all; and therefore, for worldly and political ends, they labour incessantly to instil their notions into the minds of little children. Infidels are aware that children are the most readily taught to live "without God in the world;" and hence we hear so much in favour of a godless education, and are told that not a word should be said to children about religion, but a total silence observed on that subject until they are come to years of discretion. Let it not be said that these people strike in with the current of human nature only because their deeds are evil. They simply avail themselves of a principle of which God is the Author; and which is as efficient for the purposes of religion as it is for those of worldliness and sin. We are to labour in our vocation as others do in theirs. They are diligent

and persevering; and we are to be "stedfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord," forasmuch as we know that our labour "is not in vain in the Lord."

8. If our notions of morality are derived from the Bible, the moral state even of our own country is very far from what is necessary in order to man's present well-being and eternal happiness. These things are often lamented, and are matters of frequent and general complaint; but we often fail to consider how greatly this state of things is fostered by our neglecting the conversion of children. Yet there are at least two ways in which this omission tends to increase the evil, which is so justly matter of complaint.

It is so very common for children and young people to be worldly and irreligious, that many regard this as a sort of natural necessity, to which, however wrong it may be, they must reluctantly submit. The children of ungodly parents are ignorant of God, and of course obey the dictates of a depraved nature, and live in the practice of sin. Even religious people are constantly saying, "We can teach our children, but cannot give them grace:" which is merely their mode of complaining that, after all their efforts, young persons must and will follow the devices of their own hearts. Young persons who have attended the most religious schools, and been carefully brought up, are often found to feel just like other people, and to act like the rest of mankind. Hence it is concluded there can be no moral development in children; and all make up their minds to see them follow a multitude in doing evil. The consequence is, that by the time they are come to maturity, they are blinded and hardened by "the deceitfulness of sin;" the power of evil habit is confirmed; and they are led "captive by the devil at his will." Not having submitted to Christ they become hostile to religion,

argue against its claims, and either neglect them altogether, or become mere formalists, and lovers of the present evil world. There are millions of people in this highly favoured country who scarcely ever enter the house of God, and many others who are strangers to the joys of religion, and the hopes of a future life.

If you wish to know the origin and cause of this state of things, you must look into our families and into our schools. Were our children made to understand the justice of the claims of God, and the wisdom and profit of submitting to His arrangements, they would consent to become His servants; that consent would develope itself in a moral and religious life; the character of the community would gradually improve; and adults would "set their hope in God," and "keep His commandments."

There is another way in which the state of things we complain of would be improved by attention to the religion of children. When youth has been spent in worldliness and frivolity, a great and irreparable damage has been inflicted upon the world. Even should the parties afterwards be converted and saved, their power religiously to influence and benefit others is either greatly lessened, or has passed away entirely, and for ever. Religion is upheld and promoted either by young persons, or by such as are in the prime and vigour of their days. Look abroad, take notice of what is going on in every direction,—among both clergy and laity,—among men and women,—in all sections of the church;—and it will be found that persons belonging to this class are the most zealous, active, and efficient agents in the spread of morality and religion. But then all such persons obtained their religious principle in early life; many of them, when but little children, submitted their wills to Christ. This act of consent developed itself in a course of zealous activity, and they became a blessing

to mankind. Such as yield themselves unto God at the beginning of life become "the lights of the world, and the salt of the earth."

9. All religion, whether in adults or children, is either a personal or social development. It is a spark, spreading into a blazing fire. It is a little cloud, becoming larger and larger, until it covers the face of the whole heaven. In some respects there is such a thing as instantaneous conversion, and sinners are suddenly turned from darkness to light. In other respects religion is a progressive work, a change "from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." There is a great moral development from a serious thought, or a good desire, to loving the Lord our God with all our heart, and our neighbour as ourselves. Among the spirits of the just made perfect, "the joys of holiness below" have grown into "the joys of heaven." The millennium itself will be a great social and religious development. At first the knowledge of God was confined to a corner; but then it will have advanced to cover the whole earth, "as the waters cover the sea." For a time they are but a small number who "in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ;" but at length "all kings shall fall down before Him: all nations shall serve Him."

The beginning of this work is a great happiness in adult life, or even in old age; but when it begins in childhood it is the best both for the world and the parties themselves. We advise, therefore, all who love the Lord Jesus Christ, and the souls He has redeemed, and who believe that morality and religion lie at the foundation of all present and future happiness, to turn their attention especially to this one thing. Parents, ministers, Sunday-school teachers, —all classes of religious people,—should spare no pains in order to prevail upon the young voluntarily to consent to the claims of Christ, and embrace His

gracious overtures. This is by no means a hopeless undertaking; for children are reasonable beings, and able to distinguish between right and wrong. Christ "is exalted a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and remission of sins." All His claims are founded in truth; and all His laws are "holy, and just, and good." Children know that this is the case. Conscience tells them it is right to submit to Christ. If this is set before them, and pressed upon their attention, their consent will be gained. Constrained by the love of Christ, they will be heard to say,—

> "Nay, but I yield, I yield;
> I can hold out no more:
> I sink, by dying love compell'd,
> And own Thee conqueror."

This consent will ripen into a moral and religious life. Churches will increase; and the assemblies of sinners will be forsaken. Wickedness will diminish; and righteousness abound. The plans of God will be hastened in their accomplishment; and all the ends of the earth shall see His salvation.

Part Third.

"WHAT Methodism wants is a serious and affectionate religious Examination, about the age of Confirmation, of all our young people."

INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

THE remaining Papers refer to the "religious Examination" of young people, advocated by Mr. Jackson during the latter years of his life. A brief notice of the steps by which a careful study of *the theory of infant baptism* led him to this conclusion may not be out of place here.

It was not till towards the year 1855,—more than twenty years after the great question of juvenile evangelization had taken "forcible possession" of his mind,—that his attention was especially turned to this subject. It then appeared "strange" to him that he had "not thought of it before." In the course of that year, a series of able articles from his pen appeared in the "*Catechumen Reporter*," entitled, "*Is it possible to realize the theory of infant baptism*"—assumed by the Church of England in her formularies relating to children? He says:

"That Church notoriously takes it for granted:—

"1. That infants ought to be formally dedicated to God, having ordained that all of them, belonging to her communion, shall be baptized in the name of the adorable Trinity.

"2. That this solemn rite shall be followed by careful and ample evangelical instruction. Godfathers and godmothers are directed to teach children 'all the articles of the Christian faith;' and also to take them to 'hear sermons,' that from the lips of others they may still further learn the 'things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ.'

"3. The Church also assumes that this instruction will, at an early age, in general, result in personal conversion to God. According to the Prayer Book, by the time that religiously instructed children have arrived at thirteen, fourteen, or fifteen years of age, they will be fully persuaded and resolved to embrace a truly Christian life. In answer to a question solemnly proposed by the Bishop, all young people belonging to the Church of England then openly take upon themselves the vows made by others for them at their baptism. One of these vows, as everybody knows, is, that they will 'keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of their life.'

"This, let it be observed, is not the idle dream of a man with only one idea. It is the deliberate judgment of the learned and

orthodox Protestant Establishment of this country. Methodism is an offshoot of the Church. John Wesley was a clergyman. For her decisions the people bearing his name have always entertained a profound respect. . . . .

"It may perhaps be said, —'The Church teaches the doctrine of baptismal regeneration ; and all she says about children, like that figment, ought to be reckoned among the dreams of Popish superstition.' These points it is much easier to affirm than to prove ; and when advanced, they admit of a ready and effective reply."

After adverting to the fact that, in general, baptized children grow up irreligious ; "and then, in some cases, after an interval of worldliness, of longer or shorter duration, are reclaimed and converted, live holily, and die in hope ;" he inquires :—"*Is this intervening apostacy avoidable or unavoidable?* Assuming that all children are dedicated to God in baptism ; is it possible, by proper evangelical treatment, to prevail upon the larger proportion of them, as they come gradually to think and decide and act for themselves, instead of breaking away from the restraints of religion, willingly to yield themselves unto God ?"

"As at present advised," he goes on to say, "it is the conviction of the writer that Methodism should prepare for a bolder flight than has ever yet been attempted. Instead of merely seeking to reclaim adult apostates from their baptism, she should seek to fulfil in children and young people the high ends of baptism itself. . . . No existing community is so likely to turn the beautiful and Scriptural, but dead theory of the national Church into a living reality."

"I have many a gloomy and anxious season," (he writes, March, 1855,) "about the state of the work in which we are engaged, and what is to be the end of our movement. However, I cannot alter my opinion, nor adopt any other course. If infant baptism be right, we cannot be wrong . . . Every church using infant baptism ought to have arrangements for fulfilling the design of that ordinance. This is my *Torres Vedras*. On this rock I mean to stand."

On becoming a supernumerary at the ensuing Conference he observes :—

"The *theory* of the Church of England about evangelizing children is very near perfection. If the Methodists would take it up, and make it into a living reality, we should prosper as long as the sun and moon endure. I long to make the experiment, and to try, on a small scale, what can be done. May God help us!"

To this task he accordingly devoted his "few remaining days ;" and early in the following year drew up the *Resolution* found on

page 55 of this volume. "The more I think about baptism," he says, "the more I am struck with its power and bearings upon this great subject. It at once explains our objects and justifies all our proceedings. I have delivered a lecture lately and succeeded in convincing myself that Methodism itself is an inherently defective system. It is intended to reclaim those who have apostatized from their baptism: whereas, the *first* business is to fulfil the ends of baptism, and preserve them from such fearful departures from the right way." "But," he observes, "whether I shall be able to suggest any thing of practical utility remains to be seen:" for concerning "the great work of making children truly religious" he felt he was "still a learner." In a letter dated March 13th, 1856, he writes:—"The question is not without its difficulties. About these I am thinking every day, and seem to get a little fresh light. We must avoid what is fanciful, and adhere to what is practicable and useful. . . I am throbbing with anxiety, and full of hope."

Nor was this hope disappointed; for he was already approaching a conclusion which eventually proved eminently satisfactory to his own mind. "We are right," he says, (under date Aug. 4th,) "in beginning with baptism, and trying to fulfil its great design. Does it not follow from this, that *all baptized children should be examined?* In baptism they are brought into the church by the act of other people; should they not, at some time, be asked how far they are willing to become members by their own personal consent? Should not this be done by the ministers? The principle of the Church of England is, that young people are to be examined by the Bishop. I feel disposed to press this point. But it is an incipient revolution."

Two months later, he writes:—"In thinking the matter over, I become more and more confirmed in the opinion, that *all* our children ought to be *invited* to join the Society, and if found in a proper state of mind, urged and pressed to do so. Since I wrote to you last, I have personally spoken to upwards of twenty youths, and asked them expressly what they mean to do in future life,—whether they mean to submit to Christ, or to live according to the course of this world,—and also what they think about being Methodists. I have simply tried to get at their actual thinkings and feelings. . . . I am at once greatly surprized and pleased with the answers they have given to my questions, and the feelings they have displayed. On the whole, I am satisfied that the trial on which we have entered ought to be fully and fairly made. The Church of England theory for children is,—*baptism, evangelical instruction,* and *official examination,*—and it is right." That is, as he adds on another occasion, "in the hands of earnest and Christian people, it is sure to issue in true morality and living religion."

Early in 1857, it had become with him "a settled point," that "all our young people should be religiously examined, as to what they purpose and intend to do." "We want," he says, "not the Confirmation, but the *Examination:*" the principle of such an examination being that "of seeking, by individual appeal to the conscience, to gain the personal consent and formal promise of each youth in future life to submit to Christ, and as a present guarantee that this promise would be fulfilled, now, at once, to join the Society by going to some class." "Our work, however," he adds, "is beset with difficulties. May the Lord lead us in the right way!" In the prosecution of this work he passed through a long course of thought on "conscience," Fletcher's "two Gospel-axioms," and other kindred subjects; which found expression from day to day in such manuscripts and letters as appear in the present volume. Every discouragement only threw him back upon first principles, and led him afresh to compare his theory with the Bible; issued in a deeper conviction that it was "founded on the broad basis of human nature, and the purposes of God, as revealed in the Gospel;" and renewed his determination to "go on," in "all the confidence of hope."

His first published Papers on this subject appeared in December, 1856, in the last number of the *Catechumen Reporter*, a small monthly periodical in which, for sixteen years, he had faithfully imparted to his own people whatever light he received on the great question of juvenile evangelization; and which was then about to be merged, by a friendly arrangement, in the present *Wesleyan Sunday-school Teachers' Magazine.* These two Papers are reprinted here, as an appropriate introduction to those which follow, and which were written as the subject further opened before his mind.

Mr. Jackson did not succeed in obtaining any official recognition of the principle for which he contended; but he lived to see it tested "solidly," if not "extensively;" and with such results as fully to satisfy him that this was "the very thing" he had "been searching for." It became to him "as clear as that two and two make four," that baptism and evangelical instruction should be *supplemented* by "a serious and affectionate religious Examination;" and it was without "the shade of a misgiving" that he left—as his last service of love on behalf of those for whom he had thought and prayed and laboured—the earnest recommendation that this practice should, "as soon as possible," be made "connexional in Methodism."

I.

OUR PAST EXPERIENCE AND FUTURE ANTICIPATIONS.

Careful readers will perceive, in the review given above of our past labours,* that our minds, as well as circumstances, have been in a state of constant though cautious progress. We began with a thorough conviction of the truth of that great principle of original Methodism, which said to all sorts of sinners, "Ye must be born again." We are now as thoroughly convinced that this great message of the Gospel may be delivered to children, with as much ease and success as to any class of apostate adults, whether at home or abroad.

It is true that we are not likely to make out very much in the way of converting young people, until, taking them separately and individually, we appeal to each "conscience in the sight of God." Our Sunday and day schools are now making "ready a people prepared for the Lord;" but every child so prepared should, at a proper age, be taken aside, told that he can never be a true Christian without his own consent; that whatever others may do for him, the question of his salvation rests with himself; and asked, plainly, but tenderly, what he means to do. We say nothing about the results of such a question, if proposed at the close, or about the middle of life; but if asked, as it certainly ought to be, at the beginning of

* Referring to a sketch of various plans for the benefit of the children of Methodism, which had been, from time to time, advocated in the pages of the *Reporter*.

our earthly journey, while the choice between a right and a wrong course is yet possible, it will, in very many cases, be followed by the response, "I yield, I yield; I can hold out no more." Such a youth, indeed, may still have his faults; but this submission of the will to Christ is the surrender of the moral citadel; and he will no longer "refuse and rebel" as he did before. In Methodism there is a band of intelligent, kind, and holy men and women, who, for Christ's sake, would assist their ministers in securing the conversion of these young persons, and preparing them for future usefulness.

In order to employ, combine, and stimulate this invaluable agency, and keep it in motion year after year, we need but the organization of "a Mission to children," with the general stir and excitement to which that must inevitably lead. We look upon such an organization as all but an infallible certainty. If children *can* be converted, most likely that *will* be done. Nothing is more probable than an outburst of Wesleyan zeal in this particular direction. It is perfectly obvious that an idolatrous cannibal abroad, or a baptized profligate at home, is but the full development of "an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God." We already know that all future generations will be "born in sin," and therefore need not wait to see how they will conduct themselves, but may as well be prepared to tell them, as soon as they come into the world, that Jesus is the Sovereign here, and that if their stay is to be satisfactory and advantageous, they must at at once consent to submit themselves unto Him.—*Catechumen Reporter, Dec.* 1856.

II

ON THE EXAMINATION OF CHILDREN INDIVIDUALLY RESPECTING PERSONAL RELIGION.

It has been published respecting the late Rev. Charles Simeon, of Cambridge, that "on one occasion he was summoned to the dying-bed of a brother. Entering the room, his relative extended his hand to him, and, with deep emotion, said, 'I am dying, and you never warned me of the state I was in, and of the danger to which I was exposed from neglecting the salvation of my soul.' 'Nay, my brother,' replied Mr. Simeon, 'I took every reasonable opportunity of bringing the subject of religion before your mind, and frequently alluded to it in my letters.' 'Yes,' exclaimed the dying man, 'you did; but that was not enough. You never came to me, closed the door, and took me by the collar of my coat, and told me that I was unconverted, and that, if I died in that state, I should be lost. And now I am dying; and, but for God's grace, I might have been for ever undone.'"

Without undertaking to determine the right or the wrong in this particular and affecting case, we may observe that, generally, and in fact, it is very likely that what is ordinarily done by religious people, for unconverted adults, will prove to be precisely that which Mr. Simeon did for his brother. It is obviously quite necessary that something very plain, pointed, solemn, and in earnest, on the subject of conversion, should be said to all unsaved sinners; and the very best time for doing this, in the whole

period of human life, is before elder scholars finally leave a Sunday-school.

In substance and principle all this is clearly included in the theory held by the Church of England on the religious treatment of children. After publicly baptizing infants, she delivers them to "godfathers" and "godmothers," to be instructed in the verities of Christianity. Wesleyans also baptize infants, and their Sunday-schools now give to children more and better evangelical instruction than was ever previously provided for them by the Establishment of the country. When infants have grown into youths, and attained to what the Church calls "years of discretion," she sends them to the Bishop; and whoever carefully looks at the "Order of Confirmation" will see, that the first thing he does on that occasion is to subject all the candidates, severally, to an examination as to their personal thoughts and intentions respecting religion. It is true, that inquiry is made only once, is cold, formal, distant, and therefore proves of but little practical utility. But, as two things may be similar in principle, yet different in their circumstances; so a religious examination, by being repeated, wise, and affectionate, may lead to the happiest results. Such an interview will bring a devout and intelligent Wesleyan fully, and at once, acquainted with the true religious state of a child's mind, and lead him to act accordingly. . . . After children have been six or seven years in a Wesleyan Sunday-school, it is very desirable that through their future and mature life they should voluntarily either become members of Society, or be habitually seen in our congregations. Yet they will probably not be either the one or the other, so long as they continue to be dismissed from the school without any attempt to ascertain their intimate religious thoughts and purposes. One of the most formidable objections brought against Sunday-schools has always

been, that they yield but a scanty assistance to adult churches. Whenever there appears to be a weak place in any system, it is the part of Christian prudence to endeavour to strengthen it. If our Sunday-schools are to be stable and enduring, and if we wish to bring fully out the noble results of which they are capable, we must learn to know, by actual inquiry, the real views and feelings of the scholars, and put them upon a course of action, which leads directly to the issues we anticipate and desire. . . .

Should it be objected that the procedure we recommend will do no good,—that it is merely a repetition of what has been done already, and will be followed by the same unsatisfactory results; any such objector, if sincere, would do well to make the trial, and let the question be subjected to the test of experiment. He might take aside any child in a Sunday-school, twelve or fourteen years of age, and, after proving that no human being can be a true Christian without his own consent, remind the boy that his parents and teachers had already done much for him,—that he is now rapidly advancing towards the age of personal responsibility,—and then ask him, seriously and affectionately, what he means to do himself. Such a question would very likely elicit avowals surprising to the inquirer, and bring all his interrogatories to an end by calling his attention to work which required to be immediately done.—*Ibid.*

III.

INQUIRY CALLED FOR.

The end of some examinations is to ascertain the extent of knowledge, or to see what people know, and of what they are ignorant: this is meant to ascertain the state of the *will*, and to know what it prefers.

"You say that baptized children should not be left to choose and determine for themselves in religion, but should be asked, at a proper age, what their views are, and what they intend to do,—whether they really mean to submit to Christ and to undertake His service; and that they should be asked these questions, not only by their parents at home, or their teachers at school, but also by their ministers, or some one deputed by them, and authorized to speak in their name: what are your reasons for this recommendation? Why should they be examined in this formal manner, or why asked any questions at all?"

We answer:—

I. *The facts of the case loudly call for investigation.*

"Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight; for all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." "Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid Thine hand upon me." It is plain that God is near, and is continually looking upon us: how long is it before a child can perceive and acknowledge Him? It is true that all human beings are "born in sin;" and some of them remain for years in that state of moral sleep and death; although God is continually saying, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from

the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." If a soul ever look upon God, His character will make a deep impression, and not again be readily forgotten. If there is a God, then all the decisions of conscience are confirmed: then we have a moral Governor, and cannot escape from His authority. "As the eyes of servants are unto the hands of their masters;" so will our eyes be up unto the living God. We shall not do anything without first asking whether it is according to His will; and our constant language will be, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" When we know that "we have done the things that we ought not to have done, and have left undone those things that we ought to have done," we shall make confession of our guilt, and pray, "God be merciful to me a sinner." We are not hastily to say, "This child is so young he can know nothing of God. He remains totally ignorant of the God that is so near him, and with whom he has so much to do." Before coming to such a conclusion, we should *question* him on the subject, and ascertain what he knows concerning his Maker and his Judge. No human being can possibly be so young as not to be a subject of the moral government of God. To see His dominion and resolve to submit to it, is the act of a reasonable creature, which fits him alike for time and eternity, and of which he will never be ashamed, world without end.

II. *The facts of Home and Foreign missions involve a loud call for inquiry, and forcibly urge us to put serious questions to our children.*

Suppose, for instance, that a body of twenty or thirty youths are playing at quoits on the Lord's day; or a number of families neglecting the public worship of Almighty God,—this spectacle attracts a great deal of attention, and is deemed a case for a home missionary. Or if a nation of full-grown heathens are bowing to a number of idols which they have made, as

they do at this day in the East; or a tribe of cannibals are literally clubbing and eating one another, like the inhabitants of Fiji;—Christians subscribe, and missionaries are sent to such a people, to preach the Gospel of Christ. Yet all this is but the full development of seeds which are plentifully scattered nearer home. What is the true origin of heathenism, whether at home or abroad? It is that hereditary depravity which our children bring with them into the world. From this "root of bitterness" spring all the actual transgressions which abound among men. While therefore the full-grown tree deserves so much attention, and is creating so deep an interest, we cannot be indifferent about the *root* by which it was produced and is still sustained. If the one deserves the combined prayers, subscriptions, and labours of Christian people, the other should awaken their solicitude, and prompt their *inquiries*. Is that heart of unbelief still in our children, which has filled the world with such abundant and bitter fruit? or has it already begun to wither and to fade before the intense beams of the glory of God, and is it likely, by the scorchings of that fire, to be dried up and destroyed? This is a point of vast importance. In order to ascertain it, there is a loud call for inquiry.

III. *Our young people should be asked these questions because the Gospel requires the consent of the human will.*

The Apostles went out, and preached every where "that men should repent." Whatever the particular nature of repentance may be, it is clearly an act which involves voluntary consent. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Faith admits of various definitions; but they all include the idea of choice. Jesus said to His disciples, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." Any but willing obedience is unacceptable and vain. Our Lord spake a parable

to this end, "that men ought always to pray, and not to faint." Prayer is the act of those who not merely consent, but are anxious to receive what God has promised to bestow. As the Gospel contemplates man as a free agent; so he must, by an act of his own will, accept of its promises, in order that he may enjoy its blessings. He may postpone this act until he is aged, or about to die; but he must yield and become willing at last; or he cannot be saved. But a human being may consent to be saved in childhood, as well as at any subsequent period. Why not? The Bible now says to each and all of us, "To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts;" and the young may return to this call "the answer of a good conscience towards God." People may occupy themselves by asking many questions about the age at which children become accountable to God; but the submission of the will to His mercy, even in a child, is the pledge of newness of life, and the beginning of heaven.

IV. *Concern to be clear of the blood of perishing souls is a loud call for inquiry.*

When young persons are asked to consent to the Gospel message, and entrusted with a choice, the responsibility is thrown upon *themselves*. In the judgment of God Himself, this was a point of some importance. He commanded the people of Israel to choose whom they would serve; resolved, it seems, that, if they did perish, it should be the result of their own determination. God refused to accept the responsibility of their destruction. St. Paul says, "I am pure from the blood of all men;" and was unwilling to be charged with the perdition of souls. Will you be content with simply instructing your children, and remain for them responsible to God? If you are wise, you will leave them solely responsible for the result of the acceptance or refusal of

the offered mercy of the Gospel. You will not merely explain to them the nature and meaning of God's proposal, but ask their consent to it. Whether the reply be an acceptance or a refusal, the matter rests exclusively with themselves; and each must bear his own burden of happiness or misery. You cannot ensure their acceptance of the Gospel offer. That is impossible. They are free-willers, and will do as they please. But you can determine that their rejection of it shall be their own act and deed. How this is to be done without *personal inquiry* we are unable to determine. Yet this great end cannot be attained by any sort of questioning, but only by that which is most solemn and impressive. It is not to be done merely by parents asking a child, in the ordinary course of domestic duties, whether he will submit to Christ; nor simply by a Sunday-school teacher putting the same question to any member of his class; but also by something more stated and formal. A minister, or some one deputed by him, must be the examiner; and young persons must say, as in the presence of God, whether or not they consent to be the servants of Christ.

V. *The fact of the success of Methodism is a loud call for inquiry.*

It is said that multitudes of children are religiously brought up, but continue under the power of the carnal mind; and that this result, however painful, cannot be avoided. We can, however, *ask* our young people whether they will be the servants of Christ, or not. The great success of Methodism in the conversion of adult sinners cannot be denied. There may have been extraordinary revivals, and we may call these persons "miracles of grace;" which, in a right sense, undoubtedly they are. That grace is common to all mankind, since Jesus "died for all." Converted persons possess nothing which is peculiar

to themselves. All that has happened to them is the result of the religious principle which they never were without, which is possessed by all children, of which they themselves were conscious in very early life, and which struggled within them for years, until at last they were compelled to yield. But they know it would have been better had they submitted to Christ at first; and this is now perfectly possible to all the children connected with Methodism. Facts like these loudly call for inquiry. Why are our young people not now saved? Don't be satisfied with your own guesses, or the opinions of others, but *ask themselves*, "Will ye also be His disciples?" Either they will at once consent to follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, or you will be able to ascertain the true cause of their continued disobedience to Him.

VI. *Instances of disappointment are sufficiently numerous to demand this inquiry.*

Some time ago, I was conversing with an aged man belonging to another denomination, but a veteran in Sunday-school teaching, and he told me that, for years, he had observed that while children were young, they were docile and hopeful; but as soon as they entered upon their teens, and left the school, they manifested an inclination to live according to this world. This had happened, not in a few instances only, but, according to his experience, had generally come to pass. What has so often taken place is likely to occur again. Children yet to be instructed possess the same moral nature with those who have been taught before; and will probably pursue the same course. Are we to witness these failures from year to year, and to learn nothing from them? They teach us, indeed, not to despond, but to be cautious. They tell us, not that failure and disappointment are certain, but that they are possible.

We are not to conclude that our present scholars will tread in the steps of those who have left; neither are we presumptuously to take it for granted that they will all grow up to be religious men and women. The hopes of our predecessors were often blasted; and we may be disappointed as they were. The subject calls for inquiry; and it is our wisdom to go to the young people themselves, and ask what they are intending to do. Since the will utterly disregards authority and commands, it must be consulted by questions; and as in former days children have been taught the way to Christ without becoming His followers, it is time to alter our tone to that of *asking*, and say, "Will ye also be His disciples?" Our instructions should have questions added to them, seeing that, in such a prodigious number of instances, practical results have been contrary to expectations.

VII. *There is a call for inquiry respecting those children who are about to be dismissed from our schools as unconverted characters.*

I was lately in a school and conversing with its superintendent, when he told me he was well acquainted with the religious temper of the scholars; he had had his eye upon them for a long time, and well knew that most of them had no proper concern about their souls. As the time was near when many of them must learn to work for their bread, most likely they would pass away from the school under this impression, and be regarded and treated accordingly. Yet these scholars had not been *officially asked* what they intended to do, and no opportunity had been afforded them of answering for themselves. Similar cases are by no means few, and loudly call for *inquiry*. Generally speaking, this is equivalent to dismissing a youth to a life of worldliness and sin, with all its fearful consequences. No young person should be left

under the imputation of irreligion who has never been formally asked to be a servant of Christ, and himself has declined His authority.

VIII. *There is a call for inquiry, inasmuch as voluntary submission to Christ is not done at once and for life, but is a continuous act.*

It is obviously possible for a youth to consent to be the Lord's, and afterwards begin to hesitate, and even withdraw his acquiescence altogether; so that both his holiness and his happiness may not merely grow less and less, but be lost altogether. Whereas, if the act of consent first given be continued and repeated, his path through life will resemble that of the just, shining "more and more, unto the perfect day." Conversion in later life is often attended with a large measure of joyous feeling; the submission of the will to the Divine authority in childhood, however right and reasonable, is accompanied with less of religious feeling, and therefore with a smaller measure of enjoyment. But if consent is continued and repeated, personal happiness is likely to increase. The small seed will become a tree; and the stream which at first scarcely issued from the fountain, will "flow like a river," and righteousness abound "as the waves of the sea." Early submission to God will not diminish our enjoyment. While it adds to the respectability of our character, and gives us additional power of doing good, it will increase our joy in the Lord. If it was wise at first to submit ourselves unto God, it is equally so to repeat our acts of subjection to Him as long as we live; and all the ways of wisdom "are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace;" "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound," and continue, to the end of life, to respond rightly to the calls of God: "they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance. In Thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in Thy righteousness shall they be exalted."

IV.

THOUGHTS ON "CONFIRMATION."

"We want not the Confirmation, but the Examination."

As the Church of England has appointed a test of religious character to be applied to her youth, soon after they have passed out of a state of childhood, we had better turn our attention, first, to the nature of that test, and then, to the manner of its application.

The test itself may be found in the "Common Prayer Book," and is a part of the service appointed for the rite of "Confirmation." At that time the presiding Bishop solemnly asks the candidates, collectively, "Do ye here, in the presence of God and of this congregation, renew the solemn promise and vow that was made in your name at your baptism; ratifying and confirming the same in your own persons, and acknowledging yourselves bound to believe and to do all those things which your godfathers and godmothers then undertook for you?" It is ordained by authority, that to this solemn question, "every one shall audibly answer, I do." The great principle involved in this test appears to be equally binding upon all ages and sections of the Christian community. As to the test itself, it seems to be applied not to the understanding, but to another faculty of the mind. The candidates, though supposed to have been instructed, are not asked what they know, but how they *intend to act* in future life. This question of the Bishop obviously assumes that knowledge is not religion; for he inquires, not into the intellectual attainments of the young people, but concerning their moral convictions and purposes.

While this question does not relate to the intellect, it is a test applied directly to the *will*. The Bishop asks, whether, as the result of the teaching these candidates have already received, they are now willing to "renew," in their "own persons," the "solemn promise" made in their "name" by others in their baptism; and which, as we are elsewhere told, included three things, being all the parts of a holy life. No man can be a true Christian without his own consent. The voluntary consent to this great covenant with God, of the several young persons before him, is the great point which the Bishop seeks to ascertain.

The test involved in this question is also applied to another faculty of the human mind. It is an attempt to gain the will by a direct appeal to the *conscience*. His Lordship asks the young people, "in the presence of God," whether they feel "bound" to believe and do what others have undertaken for them. Conscience belongs to human nature, and is found in every child of Adam. It is liable, indeed, to many mistakes; but when it declares it to be wrong to tell a lie, and right to keep the commandments of God, it gives no uncertain sound. To the tribunal of this judge a formal appeal is involved, in the question proposed to all candidates for the rite of Confirmation.

This test is also plainly intended to draw from each candidate a *formal promise* respecting his future conduct. When the Church ordains that the Bishop shall propose this question to all the young people before him, and that "every one shall audibly answer, I do," she plainly intended them to be severally committed, by promise, to a holy life.

Objection. Yet young people are often fickle. Their minds are seen to change with their circumstances. Hence there is some danger connected with these hasty avowals, especially in relation to religion; as these may possibly prove a snare to their souls.

Methodists ask no questions, and seek to draw out no promises. This appears to be the wisest course; as Solomon says, "Better it is that thou shouldest not vow, than thou shouldest vow and not pay."

Answer. Were it a matter of perfect indifference whether our conduct on earth were holy or wicked,—whether we were a curse or a blessing to other people,—whether God were our friend or our foe,—and whether, after death, heaven or hell were to be our portion,—such a course might be wise and proper. But if on these points there is no room for debate or hesitation, if there is but one path for a thoughtful man to walk in, all that remains is to commit himself to it; and perhaps the sooner he does this the better.

Were the Methodists to undertake the religious examination of young people, as they never yet have done, such an arrangement would tend to increase the number of converted and spiritually minded persons in the country. In my deliberate judgment, Confirmations, as at present conducted in the national Church, do but little in the way of diminishing the floods of ungodliness which roll over the land; there would, however, soon be a great improvement if the work of religiously examining and directing young people were more vigorously and extensively undertaken by the Methodists. . . .

In the first place, a boy, asked about his religious will and purpose by a truly devout man, in the same rank of life with himself, would be much more likely to answer sincerely and truthfully, than he would were the same question proposed by a clerical dignitary, in the presence of a number of other people, and when the expected answer was merely formal, written down, and to be committed to memory. Such a question, so proposed, would be a more direct appeal to the conscience; and the response given to it would be more satisfactory.

Above all, when a promise was so given, all thoughtful people would see a greater probability of its ultimate fulfilment. When a Methodist has prevailed upon a youth to promise submission to Christ, he takes him to *a class-meeting*. There he forms new and religious connexions, enters upon entirely new duties, is asked about his spiritual intentions—not merely once—but from week to week; and it becomes very likely that he will indeed "keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of his life." . . .

It is certainly proper that religious promises, especially those made by young people, should be accompanied by the best *guarantee* that can be obtained. Those who are acquainted with the history of commerce know the overwhelming calamities which persons have brought upon themselves by trusting to promises when they ought to have taken securities. The Church of England, from the beginning, has received promises of a holy life in baptism, and these again were renewed at the time of "Confirmation;" but with these promises the most ordinary guarantees for their performance were never connected. The result was, that this huge system of credit became rotten at its foundation. The religion and morals of the nation became thoroughly corrupt; and Methodism was absolutely necessary in order to bring about a better state of things. Nor can we expect anything better than ultimate disappointment and vexation, if we go on merely urging young people to make promises of yielding to Christ, while we take no guarantee for their performance. But were they induced to make religious promises, accompanying them with such securities as many of them are quite willing to give, the results could not fail to be eminently satisfactory.

Were all young people religiously examined, if they answer truly—and there is nothing gained by a specious falsehood—some will probably refuse immediate sub-

mission to the authority of Christ. These, like lost sheep, will go off into the wilderness, and must be followed and sought in order to be saved. At the same time the servants of Christ should not passively suffer young people to become prodigals; but try to hinder them from going into the "far country," seeing that from it so many never return. . . .

It is not the rite of Confirmation, but *the religious examination that precedes it*, which, IN A BETTER FORM, I wish to see revived among the Methodists. Methodism is not merely "Christianity in earnest." Confining our attention to the soul and substance of things, it is also "Church-of-Englandism in earnest." It has already given evangelism to her preaching, and zeal to her ministers; and it is time it gave life and utility to those institutions which religiously contemplate the youth of the country.

V.

SOME OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

I.

"Is there not a fear that our schools may swamp Methodism, by introducing into our Societies multitudes of young people, who have received what is called a religious education, but have never been truly awakened and converted to God; and whose religion consists chiefly in talk and information?"

That fear may be well or ill-founded. All depends upon the kind of teaching the children receive in our schools, which may be either very defective, and damage them for ever; or such as will, by God's blessing, train them up into as good Methodists as ever adorned that favoured Society. John Wesley never taught a principle which may not be realized in the experience of a child, as well as in that of an adult, and which will not make both of them holy in this life, and happy for ever.

Our Lord says, "The first and great commandment of the law is, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart;" "and the second is like unto it, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." He adds, "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

When this subject is considered, it will be seen that all the parts of a holy life flow from these principles; just as the leaves and blossoms and fruit of a tree all spring out of the root. St. Paul speaks of a man having "all knowledge," and yet no "love;" plainly assuming that these two things are essentially different from each other. Knowledge relates to the *under-*

standing: love belongs to the *will*. Mr. Wesley says that man's "affections are only the will exerting itself in various ways." That same principle, which at first is simply an act of the will, goes on to increase, until we love God with all our heart, and other people as ourselves. Perfect love is to the simplest act of our will just what the "tree" is to "the least of all seeds." It is the same thing; but in a form more fully developed. Until, therefore, a human being, whether young or old, has willed or chosen God in Christ,—or purposed in his mind practically to submit unto Him,—whatever he may know, he has no religion; for the seed of it has not yet been planted in the soil of his heart.

If, therefore, schools are conducted on a principle which leads children to assume that knowledge is religion, they are very likely to become vain and talkative. But should they, in early life, be made deeply to feel that the principle of all religion is *love*,—that its true seat is in the human *will*,—and that it begins to exist only when we *choose* Christ as our Saviour and Ruler; then are they likely to grow into as genuine Methodists as ever lived, either in former or later times.

II.

It may be further objected that this proposal is unequal to the result anticipated. Our object is to effect a great moral revolution; and we only speak of another method of treating young people and children. It will possibly be said,—"What you are expecting would require a general outpouring of the Spirit, an extensive revival of religion, and a considerable number of zealous and efficient ministers,—and not the paltry measure it is proposed to introduce."

No improvement, let it be observed, is hindered by what we recommend. It is true our object, ultimately, has a character of vastness; and equally true, that David has said, "Out of the mouth of babes and

sucklings hast Thou ordained strength." If we begin with children, they will not always continue such; but will rapidly grow into men and women. This will increase their power; but the thoughts and feelings of their childhood will be carried into adult life. "But stop," it is said, "for their goodness may prove as 'a morning cloud,' and as 'the early dew.' Children have often disappointed their teachers." Very true: and children have been religiously instructed, and yet never *consented* to the moral government of God. Young people who know only themselves and the world, or who have but a slender acquaintance with God, may be fickle and changeable; and no wonder, seeing "the world passeth away," and "all flesh is grass." But God is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Such as consented to be governed by Him when young will not conclude that His dominion has passed away when they arrive at old age. They will still say to their Maker, "Thou art the Guide of my youth;" and now, "my flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." When children have given themselves to the Lord, they become the most efficient promoters of general religion. In various places, the young have first consented to be the servants of Christ themselves, and then proved eminently zealous and active in the extension of His kingdom. Take pains with the young, to set their hearts right with God; and by degrees they will subdue the earth by the power of the Gospel.

III.

"But how can we speak personally to all the young people connected with Methodism, when there are upwards of half a million scholars in our Sunday-schools, besides the families who never attend these institutions?"

This, although a large work, is not impracticable; since converted people can "teach every man his brother." Methodism employs her laity in assisting ministers; and it is the boast of her people that they are "all at it, and always at it." Surely, while every thing around us is advancing, you do not suppose that among the followers of Wesley a knowledge of their own peculiar duties is to stand still. Intelligence is spreading, and we look for better things. Should the Wesleyan people retain their piety, they will be constrained by the love of Christ more thoroughly to study the art of winning souls to Him. When the Methodists fully understand their own business, they will out-do even Bishops in the religious examination of young people; promises of a holy life will be guaranteed by going to a class-meeting; conversions will take place about the age of Confirmation; and, instead of helplessly deploring the flood of ungodliness which overflows the land, they will rise, in the might of God, and say to it, "Thus far shalt thou go, but no further; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed."

VI.

MINISTERS.

I am persuaded we shall never be right until our ministers become, in fact, "religious Inspectors." Of this I have long and earnestly thought.

No minister need be so alarmed at the heading of this Paper as to begin to enumerate his engagements, tell us what he has done, and how impossible it is for him to do anything more. It is altogether useless to enjoin work upon any man which he is physically unable to perform. We therefore say to every minister, frankly, and at once, that, provided he will seriously undertake the duty he owes to children, he may do it either in person or by proxy, as may be most convenient to himself. All we request is, that he will become responsible for the work; and either do it himself, or see that it is honestly done by others. Parents at home, and teachers in Sunday and other schools, are giving many lessons; and we ask the minister to be kind enough periodically to subject the young people to a religious and affectionate examination, in order to see in what degree they have attained the great end of instruction, in their actual or probable regeneration,—whether they have willingly submitted to Jesus Christ,—and what is likely to be their character in future life.

That Christian ministers have something to do for children is distinctly acknowledged by the Church of England. Accordingly, she ordains that infants be baptized, and youths brought to the Bishop, and confirmed. It is true this has, to a large extent, practically degenerated into an empty form; yet it involves the distinct acknowledgment of a great ministerial duty to

the succeeding generation. But as the Establishment had taken charge of all the children in the country, and as these innumerable swarms were all "born in sin," it appeared a kind of impossibility that they should really rise from a death of sin unto a life of righteousness. No such result was expected; and Confirmation became a simple ceremony. In outward profession, indeed, these youthful candidates renounced "the devil and all his works," and engaged to "keep God's holy will and commandments;" but nobody expected them to do this in fact and in truth. That was regarded as something altogether unattainable.

But if this was the desponding feeling of the national clergy, surely God has put a more hopeful spirit into Methodist preachers. People feel the difficulty of persuading the young to be truly religious, and think their future life will bring a more "convenient season." But when the early Methodists attempted to evangelize the masses in this country, the undertaking was laughed at as quixotic, and likely to end in disappointment. They tried, and succeeded. Multitudes of adult profligates were reclaimed and saved. If there is any truth in the Scriptural doctrine respecting the accumulative power of sinful habits, and if it is a fact that many adult sinners have been made into saints, surely we are not going to despair of the salvation of children. A Jewish prophet has asked, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" adding, "Then may ye also do good who have been accustomed to do evil." An Apostle has said to Christians, "Take heed, brethren, lest . . . any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." We all know, both by inspired testimony and by experience, that bad habits give rise to a constantly increasing power, which at length renders it morally impossible for us to "cease to do evil," and "learn to do well." Adult transgressors, therefore, must, in the nature of things, be the most completely under this fearful power, and the faster

tied and bound by the chain of sin. Children have lost the least of their moral freedom, and are, on that account, the more ready to hearken to the call of God, and to turn unto Him. Wesleyan ministers, in dealing with the young, will remember what their fathers did with adults, by the blessing of God, and will look for equally illustrious displays of His power and grace.

We ask the attention of the ministers in Methodism, because the thoughts of other parties often run in a different direction. Parents can, in some cases, hardly obtain bread for their families. Sunday-school teachers sometimes satisfy themselves with the simple reading of the Bible. The conductors of daily schools have the parents of the pupils to please, and the inspectors to meet. Ministers understand the paramount claims of religion, and will remind the children of the voice of conscience, and the necessity of being "born again." By that authority which is inherent in their office, they will engage helpers in this "labour of love." They, too, are likely to make arrangements for the moral preservation and edification of such as are deemed eligible for church-membership. Mr. Wesley avowed his belief that the late revival of religion in this country was the beginning of the "latter-day glory;" and if those who inherit his name and principles go on to do for children what was formerly done for adults, even his hope is very likely to be realized.

An inspired Apostle felt the necessity of reviewing his work, and making a further effort to fulfil the gracious purposes of the Redeemer. We read, Acts xv. 36, "And some days after, Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do." It was not enough that these missionaries had once visited the heathen in Asia

Minor ; they must repeat their visit, and endeavour to correct what was amiss, and supply what was defective. The proposal was not simply a matter of choice ; it came from a sense of duty and obligation. There was nothing unkind in it. No unfavourable report had reached the ears of the Apostle. He wished to visit his brethren, whom he still regarded in the bowels of Jesus Christ. In these cities the word of the Lord had been preached by Apostles ; still it was deemed necessary to examine on the spot, and for themselves, the actual state of things.

Christ has made known to His church and people His great and gracious designs, and it is their solemn duty to endeavour to realize His intentions. Here are multitudes of children who have been dedicated to God in holy baptism, and thereby made members of His church. We have religious families, Sunday-schools, and daily schools, in all of which they are brought up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Circumstances, therefore, have given these children a claim on our Christian sympathy and attention. It is the solemn duty of the adult church, through her ministers, (either in person or by proxy,) to seek to ascertain—by actual inquiry—whether they have been so far instructed by these various advantages as to be willing to become consenting parties to their own baptism.

As infant baptism appears to be a Divine ordinance, so it is plain that in that institution God had very gracious intentions respecting children. The great bulk and majority of them,—"the generation to come,"—were intended to become the people of God, not in name and appearance only, but in truth and reality. If such are the Divine intentions, and if but a small proportion of our countrymen are yet brought under the power of true religion, then there is a loud call for the principal officers of the church to review our Sunday-school operations.

What is wanted in Methodism is for our ministers and church authorities to look after our children. They ought to be heard to say:—"There are many parents who often speak to their children on the subject of religion; the same is done in our Sunday and daily schools; what then is the actual religious result of all this training and teaching?" A prudent man looks before him, and considers what is likely to come. The seed has been sown; the blade appears;—what will probably be the character of the future harvest? It is said, indeed, that Methodist ministers cannot do this, because there are other duties which require their time and attention. Of their numerous engagements I am quite aware, and therefore expect this work to be done either in person or by proxy. It is not necessary that they should themselves inquire into the religion of our young people: it is quite enough if they see that this is done by others. Nor is it necessary to inquire how much children know, and are able to explain. It is mainly important to ascertain the state of their *moral sense:* how far they love God, or fear Him, and are willing to keep His commandments. All this is the special duty of the principal officers in the church of Christ. God expects and requires them to see that this work is done. Infants are baptized by ministers. It is not by their parents, or by school-teachers of any description, but by ministers of the word, that they are officially admitted into the church; and therefore these are specially bound to see how far they return "the answer of a good conscience toward God." If these thoroughly understand their position and duties, they will never dream of leaving the religious care of children altogether to others, but will take the trouble of asking about it themselves. When they think of the young people connected with the church, they will say with St. Paul, "Let us go again and visit" them, "and see how they do." Whenever an inquiry is

instituted into the religion of our children, the result is sure to be of a very cheering character. There are upwards of half a million of scholars in our Sunday-schools; and were they thus canvassed, there would be a large increase in the number of the avowed subjects and servants of our adorable Master and Redeemer.

I have lately read, in an American review, an article on "the relation of baptized children to the church." It is satisfactory to see Methodists writing on the subject. A thorough reconciliation between Methodism and infant baptism will be a great achievement. The American writer has some speculations, which are not of much practical utility. He says baptized infants are members of the church, and wishes them to be treated as such. I am not yet sure that they are *full* church members. Such, perhaps, they cannot be, without their own consent. Yet baptism in some way connects them with the church, and gives them a *right* to ministerial supervision.

I have been lately thinking that God has made the children of Christian people the members of His church on earth. His design in this arrangement is, that the principles of vital religion and morality may be implanted in their hearts in early life, and appear in their conduct when men and women. Children, therefore, have ecclesiastical rights; and ministers and other church officers are under obligations to God, which cannot be disregarded or neglected without guilt. Young people have a right to be taught what God has revealed;—for "these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children;"—and to be taught

in a way that shall lead them to "set their hope in God," and "keep His commandments." Whether church-officers and children like or dislike this, it is to be done; for the "Lord of all" has said to the one, "Suffer little children to come unto Me;" and to the other, "Incline your ear, and hear." Whenever it is a man's duty to be a minister, or to take the "oversight" of the fold of Christ, he must not affect independence, and begin to pick and choose, but take things as settled by his Master. Accordingly, he takes the oversight of the entire "flock of God," including children and all over which "the Holy Ghost" hath made him "overseer."

Both parents and instructors in schools have always professed to teach religion to children. What Methodism wants, and what is enforced in the New Testament, is, *an adult church which transmits inward religion to "the generation to come."*

There is a problem to be solved by Methodism at home, and of course also by our missionaries abroad:—How is true, living religion to go down from father to son? Lord, teach us!

Methodist preachers, in all their sermons, assume that people are to live several years to the world, and then to be converted. This will not do. . . . . Our great principle is, to begin with baptism, and steadily seek an evangelical conversion in childhood. There must be a way to convert young people truly to God, or else infant baptism is all wrong. This, when once attained, would again "turn the world upside down."

Infant baptism is generally administered in the Wesleyan Connexion. The Church of England asks all her children whether they consent to their own baptism. Yet, to this day, no custom or regulation exists in Wesleyanism which requires any person to make any such inquiry of the multitudes of children connected with the community. John Wesley taught his people to say to all, "Ye must be born again;" he has been called "a free-willer;" yet he left a community which, since his death, has called itself a church, and dedicated children to Christ, but never officially said to them, "Will ye also be His disciples?"

When the Methodists thought of children, they taught them first to understand the parables and history of the Bible; and, afterwards, reading, writing, and arithmetic. In all these departments they have examinations, and do very well. But as to morals and religion,—which is the one thing "needful," the sole subject of the Bible, and the main thing which Methodism was intended to make known to man,—to this day they have no authorized examination at all. The Church, indeed, continues to ask an important question, at the proper time, but is content with an unsatisfactory answer. Methodism talks of supplying the deficiencies of the Church, and avoids an untruthful answer by asking no questions.

Mr. —— said many very extraordinary things, and seemed wishful to have sinners converted; but appeared to have no more idea about children than as if there were none upon earth. This is the case with a great many of our own people; and I am often so

amazed as almost to doubt whether I exist or not. However, there certainly are children; they will very soon be men and women; and I am utterly unable to understand all this zeal for the salvation of adult sinners, connected with this utter ignoring the sanctification of the little and the young.

What would you think about proposing to Methodist preachers, that they should examine, either in person, or appoint a substitute to do it for them, all Methodist children? The examination would be *subjective* rather than *objective*: or, its design would be,—not to ascertain how much they know of the lessons they have studied, but what *impression* these had left on their mind, and what were their thoughts and intentions about submitting to Christ, and becoming His servants. Surely it is right that those who have been baptized, and taught by their parents, or in our schools, and have been the children of many prayers and anxieties, should be questioned as to their views and purposes. Could the ministers be brought to examine and inquire about these young creatures, this might lead to a connexion with the church.

There are others beside our Lord's immediate disciples, to whom it is necessary for Him to say, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me."

Although I continue to read and think about the best method of evangelizing the world, I can see nothing better—nor anything so good as to say to all young people, "Will you be the disciples of Christ?" God has endowed human nature with freedom, and always treated it on that principle. Even in paradise, there could be no obedience without the concurrence of two wills. When Adam differed with his Maker, he fell into sin. Since the fall, a Saviour has been

provided, and humanity redeemed; but still the sinner could be saved only by being "willing and obedient." Two signs were ordained by God of the covenant between fallen man and Himself: Circumcision and Baptism. But these, however administered, were acts of God alone, and therefore could only be useful to infants, while irresponsible, but not to adults, without their own consent. Bushnell says that baptized children ought to be church members, and we must *assume* they will share in the faith of their parents. But have they been asked this question, and have they said, "Yes?" Nothing but truth and reality will set the world morally right. There cannot be a covenant, without the consent of two parties.

I say young people must "consent to their baptism," rather than they must "be converted;" because this latter term is apt to mislead, by suggesting the idea of something to be done by God, rather than what is to be done by themselves. But

"In *me* is all the bar."

Yet we must be careful so to speak, that, while we intimate that consent is what they have to *do*, it is not all they have to *expect*. When they yield, God will do for them "exceeding abundantly."

Mr. —— admits that baptism is incomplete without "the inward and spiritual grace." I say it is incomplete without "the consent of man." It is Arminian phraseology, used in a Calvinistic sense. It appears to me that the religious people of this age are neglecting human nature at its source. But I wish to be right.

In baptism we pray that the infant may be "born again," and certainly ought to feel some solicitude

about having our prayer answered. Consent is, incipiently, the new birth. That begins when the youth says, "I will accept His offers now." We pray for this, because it is the gift of God, as well as the act of man; and we also say, "Wilt thou submit to Jesus Christ?" because it is the act of man, as well as the gift of God. We need not go into the subject any further. It is enough to know, with the Arminian, that people are sent to hell because God says, "Ye will not come unto Me, that ye might have life:"—and with the Calvinist, that St. Paul says to all true Christians, "By grace are ye saved." But when an infant is baptized, the ordinance cannot be carried out, and the design of God fulfilled, without the minister. Christ says, "Baptize all nations:"—"teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." The minister must therefore be, at least, a *religious Inspector*. Whatever his engagements may be, he ought, at any rate, to superintend the instruction of baptized children, and see to it that—whoever are their teachers—they are properly and efficiently taught.

I can neither forget nor disbelieve what Fletcher has said about the two "*Gospel axioms.*" They must *both* be minded by those who would benefit this fallen but redeemed world. Religiously training the young belongs especially to the *second* Gospel axiom. Revivals and missions to adults are, in a great measure, connected with the *first;* and the inferences drawn from it constitute either antinomianism, or "pure religion." God was abundantly gracious to the Jews; and the inference they drew from the fact was,—"Abraham sits very near the gates of hell, and suffers no Israelite to go down there." St. Paul's inference was,—Since God has been so abundantly kind to man, we ought carefully to abstain from sin, and abound in

all the duties of the Gospel (see Phil. ii. 12, 13, and iii. 12). There are people who practically say,— God has been exceedingly gracious to adults, and therefore we need not trouble ourselves much about children. Not having so learned Christ, having now the power to serve the young people in Methodism, and having taken up their cause, it is not likely that I shall lay it down until death. Whether our main principle be right or wrong, is now referred to the supreme Judge; "and the Lord do what seemeth Him good." There are two classes of children for whom the Wesleyan church is responsible to God; namely:—such as have been baptized by Methodist preachers, and such as come to our schools for religious instruction. To me it is as clear as that two and two make four, that these should be seriously and affectionately *asked* whether or not they intend to submit to Jesus Christ. . . . They *will* answer sincerely, if an appeal is made to their *consciences*, instead of putting the answer into their mouth.

"Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things? They say unto Him, Yea, Lord." Our Lord was delivering to His disciples a variety of parables, and directly appealing to their intellectual faculties; but speaking to them, even by striking parables, could be of little use, unless they correctly comprehended His meaning. He therefore begins as a Teacher, but ends as an Inspector, saying to them, "Have ye understood?" Christianity appeals, not to our intellectual, but to our moral faculties. Both these are called "wisdom" in the Bible; but although they have the same name, they are essentially distinct. "O Lord, how manifold are Thy works; in *wisdom* hast Thou made them all." Here the word is used in its intellectual sense. "The fear of the Lord,

that is *wisdom;* and to depart from evil is understanding." Here the word occurs in its moral sense. An appeal addressed to the moral faculty stands as much in need of an inspector, as does an appeal addressed to the intellect. When any human being has been told of his duty, and persuaded to submit himself unto God, it is as necessary to stop, and turn round, and ask him whether he consents or not, as it is, after we have given him any piece of information, to ask him if he understands what has been said. Nay, in this case it is still more necessary; for the understandings of all are not naturally obtuse, but the wills of all are perverse, by reason of original sin. Government appoints an Inspector of the intellects of poor children, whose business it is to see that they are properly taught: and seeing that so many children, for a religious purpose, are baptized in our chapels, and taught in our schools, it is quite needful that some person should say to them, "Will you be the disciples of Christ?" and, if possible, gain their consent.

This question is commonly proposed to youths in their teens; yet it assumes that even that is a late period of life for making the voluntary surrender which it contemplates. Christ having waited, year after year, without witnessing any signs of submission to His authority, at length proceeds to ask the parties, through His minister, whether they intend to acknowledge their obligations, and to pay the vows already made to Him.

At present, it appears to me that if preachers would but undertake to examine religiously the elder scholars

in our Sunday-schools, that, in the end, would lead to all that we really need. Suppose that some children are taught religion by their parents, some by Sunday-school teachers, and some in day-schools, the preacher would find out where they are when he says to them, "Are you willing to submit to Christ?" If they say, "No," we must try to put them right; and if they say, "Yes," that is all we want. Yet we cannot say the work is finished, or that all such are fit to be received into the Society. But the bud has appeared, and the flower will follow; the day has dawned, and noon will come. The Church of England asks for declared consent, and we must have it too; and why should we be ashamed to ask for it? We can scarcely do so with adults; but that is no reason why we should not do it with the young. If the way-side hearers had been asked why they neglected to cover the seed, it might have led to their salvation.

Cyrus, when besieging Babylon, perceived the importance of the river on the banks of which the city stood, as being at once the cause of its security by shutting out its enemies, and the source of its internal prosperity. By providing an outlet for the stream, and thereby diverting it from its ancient channel, he at once obtained for his troops an easy entrance into this splendid capital, and doomed it to slow but certain decay.

Long has the devil repeated, with grievous success, the same stratagem of war. It is high time to interrupt his proceedings, and put a stop to his triumphs; to repair the banks of that noble river formed by the incredible pains and patience of our Sunday-school teachers; and to allow the stream of our youth to glide onward to the city of God, at once its defence and glory, and the source of its increase and perpetuity.

VII.

TO CLASS-LEADERS.

"If a general attempt is to be made to bring our children to feel their responsibility to God, *what is to become of them afterwards?*" To this deeply important question Mr. Jackson gave his anxious consideration. He writes, Oct. 30th, 1856 :—

"We are assuredly right in speaking to the elder children individually, and asking them personally what each is intending to do. We are also right in getting them into classes as "hearers."* But the great question is, Shall we stop here? or shall we also *persuad* them, if we can, to join the Society and meet in class? Two difficulties seem to rise up and oppose this course. In the first place, they will probably soon be asked to contribute to our funds. When they *choose* to join, they will, of course, make the best of their own choice; but if we *persuade* them to take this step, will they not then possibly blame us for doing so? In the next place, some of them may not turn out well, and prove very troublesome to the leaders. Already these are under some apprehension, and think we are going to swamp them with floods of children. They had rather be without such company than be troubled by their presence.

"Yet, upon the whole, we *must* go on personally conversing with the elder children, come of it what will. But I am rather inclined, just now, to ask and *persuade* them to submit to Christ—generally, to enter a class of mere "hearers," and leave them there until we get further light. I have ventured to ask our Leaders'-meeting this question :—'In case of a child, twelve years old, wishing to join the Society, on what terms would he be received?' The question has produced some excitement, and is still under discussion."

He soon, however, as the reader will have observed, saw it to be "vital" that young persons promising submission to Christ

* Their presence or absence at public worship to be noted in a small class-book, by one of their number. Mr. Jackson's earnest request to the minister, at the same time, being, that he would, "while in the pulpit, remember that children are a part of the congregation, and cause them to understand and feel that some part of the sermon is meant for and deeply concerns themselves."

should "meet in class;" and thus be brought under "the mighty moral influence involved in frequent intercourse with a body of adult and truly religious people." To this privilege (if they were willing to avail themselves of it) he believed that baptism entitled them; and thought that by continuing them "on trial," for a suitable time, all serious inconvenience might be avoided. "But," he observes, in a letter dated Jan. 21st. 1858, "we are sure to be complained of, sooner or later, for bringing so many children into Society. To obviate this, we must have the consent of every leader before sending any young people to his class. Go on, then, mediating between leaders and children." He was in the habit of addressing the following QUESTION TO A WESLEYAN CLASS-LEADER:—

"*If elder children, or young people, are brought to you, who are properly, but merely, willing to meet in class, will you receive them, and allow them to remain on trial, until they have decided whether to receive Christ or to refuse Him?*"

The subjoined paragraphs will further express his views respecting the "difficulties and advantages" of the course he recommended. The entire subject of young people and class-meetings is more fully gone into in a little volume of his Manuscripts and Letters, published at *the Conference Office* soon after his death, which deserves the careful consideration of every class-leader in Methodism.

It is to me no matter of surprise that the friends in different places have thought it better for young people to be met, not in ordinary Society-classes, but in some sort of intermediate or preparatory classes. This is a common notion among our people, when driven into a corner, and obliged to admit something must be done. *Practically, this will be found to end in their never getting into Society at all.* On this point a battle will have to be fought; and you had best have your mind made up, and be ready to assign reasons why young persons should, if willing, be admitted not into preparatory classes, but at once become members of the Society, *on trial.*

It may be proper to refer to some of the difficulties which are supposed to exist in reference to children meeting in class. Some of the members object to receive them, and seem to have little sympathy with their religious experience, and would rather keep them from, than encourage them to go to the class. Some say that they learn set phrases from the older members, and therefore should not be permitted to meet with them; that many of them are superficial in their experience, prove unsteady, and drop off, like leaves in autumn; that the trouble of so many young and inexperienced creatures will be almost endless, and the result not likely to be equal to the care and labour bestowed; that, in fact, it is a doubtful novelty, and, therefore, we had better go on as we are doing than speculate in any new modes of action; that, as many of the children are poor, and not able at present to contribute to the support of the work of God, we shall either have to keep them on trial for an indefinite period, or greatly embarrass our financial economy; and that, therefore, they must either remain as they are, or be gathered into separate and distinct classes.

As to the inconveniences of letting them alone, and attempting nothing more than what we have been doing:—On a moderate computation there must be *fifty thousand* young persons leaving our schools every year. To these must be added the children connected with Methodism who have never attended any of these institutions. So that multitudes have certainly departed not into our church, but into the world. As many will go in future as have gone in times past.

Our children are there, and must either be gathered into a class or remain out. By being left to themselves, many of them will probably fall into bad company, and get into bad courses,—and never find their way to Christ. By being got into a class, they may at least be

taught to act more reasonably as moral and accountable creatures.

It appears to me there are two things which are wanted in the case of our young people, in order to bring our Sunday and day-school instruction to a satisfactory result. The first is, to gain their personal consent to be servants of Christ. That must be sought by appealing to their conscience, and talking with them kindly and privately on the subject. The second thing is, to put them into a *right position*; so that, on leaving school, they will be likely to keep in a religious course. To suppose they will be moral and religious, if left to the world and themselves, is like expecting a man to be honest while sent to live among thieves. They should "meet in class" in order to escape the evil that is in the world.

The appeal to the youthful conscience, when made, needs to be repeated. Hence the need of meeting in class. According to St. Peter, the "answer" of the conscience "towards God" is the chief part of baptism. This at once rebukes the Methodists, and cuts up all Puseyism by the roots.

It strikes me that two things are necessary for a youth, as to his religion and morality. The first is, to set him rightly agoing; and the other is, to provide him suitable assistance afterwards. A right beginning belongs to the *will*, rather than to the intellect. Jesus said, "Ye will not come unto Me, that ye might have life." Until a youth submits to Christ, and comes to Him for salvation—which are both acts of the will—he has no religion; whatever he may know, and however many questions he can answer.

Again, suppose a boy at school to be all that we

could desire, and all that he ought to be, he is essentially a social creature; and unless provided with suitable companions, who protect his morality and religion, it is a thousand to one but he will miss his way at some stage or other of the journey of life.

I do not see how young people in this world can even be truly moral, unless they act on the principle of a class-meeting, and periodically search their hearts in the presence of God.

I have a notion that the want of class-meetings, in closer connexion with schools, is the great cause of our non-success.

Religion begins in the fear of God; and more than this should not, in general, be expected in children. If it be genuine, it will ripen into faith, pardon, and love, in after years. Morality and religion are, at first, a small seed, a tender plant, which requires cultivation and protection; but it will grow into eternal life.

I think the cause of the religion of young people would get on better in Methodism if there was more knowledge and concert among all parties concerned in it. Parents, teachers, and class-leaders are all concerned; but at present they know very little of the movements of each other. The difference is that between an unexpected and an expected visit. What would you think of a meeting between these parties?

Our principle is, that morality and religion are the most needful and important things to human beings. These they may acquire in early childhood, until baptized infants are grown up into holy men and women. In order to this, the chief thing is to gain their free consent to be the servants of Christ. Little or nothing is done until that great point has been secured. This must be sought by saying, "Will you be the disciple of Christ?" and if this appeal is not sufficient, we must apply to the mind all the revival stimulus; but, at all events, they must be brought to say, "Nay, but I yield, I yield!" This is absolutely necessary; yet, after all, it is but a beginning, and the great question remains, What is to be done with the young people afterwards? My own opinion is, that, among the Methodists, many of those who are willing to take the trouble of watching over their souls know not how to treat them. I have met in classes with children who, by their own account, have been justified and sanctified, and very soon have become backsliders, and their goodness, like "a morning cloud," has vanished away. Big lads in a Sunday-school, who were tolerably clever, and able to answer all sorts of questions, have become vain of their attainments, and evidently self-conceited and difficult to deal with. Such feelings as these are very different from the mind that was in Christ, and from the tempers which fit people to live well in such a world as this, and prepare them for the society of the spirits of just men made perfect. Yet all this is mainly to be ascribed to their leaders or teachers not knowing how to treat them. Perhaps it is owing to such facts as these that so many good people have kept aloof from the young, and thought it best to have nothing to do with them. Yet these evils assuredly may be avoided, and even children taught to be religious, humble, and well-behaved. After our youth have consented to be

the servants of Christ, teachers and leaders must be instructed how to treat them, in order "that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things."

In contributing to the support of a Christian church, there is a great principle involved, which should by all means be maintained; but to this rule, where children are concerned, there are so many exceptions, that a discretionary power should be exercised by the leader, under the sanction of the minister, and the young people advised accordingly.

It has been my conviction, for years, that subjecting them all, at once, to our financial rules, is a suicidal plan.

Attention to the young may not be the way suddenly to increase the income of a circuit; but it is the best for the world, and the most pleasing to God.

VIII.

TO SENIOR SUNDAY-SCHOOL TEACHERS.

I. *A solemn question to be asked.*

Sunday-schools being identified with a progressive Christianity must also themselves be progressive, like the system to which they belong. There is ample room for improvement, both in their mode of management and in the blessing from God which attends them.

As to their mode of management, we invite your attention to one particular. There is a Scriptural Lesson appointed for every Sunday, and the teachers set the children to read over this chapter, accompanied by such remarks as are likely to enable them the better to understand it. St. Peter says, "Baptism now saveth us;" and then proceeds to define the baptism of which he speaks. It is, he adds, "not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God." An answer necessarily presupposes a previous question. The entire Bible involves a very solemn question, proposed by God to every human soul. That question, in substance, is, "Will you be the disciple of Christ?" The question itself is contained in the Bible; but the answer is not to be found there. Could you understand the lesson and explain it as well as the most able commentator, still that would be only to know the *question* which God has proposed. The *answer* is for the pupil to give. The question is an appeal to his conscience, and the answer is to be found *within himself.* Every thing depends upon whether that answer be, "Yes," or "No."

II. *On Sunday-school examinations.*

Human beings, whether children or adults, should be instructed in the same great evangelical principles. Mr. Wesley has affirmed that "opinion is not religion," that "even right opinion" may be as "distant from religion as the east is from the west," since "there may be a right opinion of God, without either love or one right temper towards Him." This principle has been so opened to the understandings and applied to the consciences of adults, as to compel many a self-conceited professor to seek a better religion than that which consisted in mere opinion. But we have seen many Sunday-scholars examined in "Scripture history" and "Theology;" and provided they could answer readily, and with correctness, they have been dismissed with honour; and certainly never suspected that they might have all this right knowledge and opinion concerning God, "without either love or one right temper towards Him:" nay, that, after all, they might be as "distant from religion as the east is from the west." While, therefore, we endeavour to impart to children a knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, and render them thoroughly acquainted with the principles of revealed religion, we must never forget that unless they learn something above and beyond all this, they are never likely to become such Methodists as John Wesley intended his people to be.

III. *The best schools.*

I am perfectly satisfied that it is with the *wills* of our young people that we have to deal. All instruction which does not end in *moral decision* appears to me as essentially defective. Whoever may be the teacher, and whatever the mode of instruction, the pupil must be brought to say, "I will accept His offers now." That which leads to all this may be felt by children as well as by adults.

Whenever the Methodists apply the test of a general

religious Examination, it will be found that the best schools are those which have been the most *successful;* and that those children have received the highest religious instruction who are the most ready to keep God's holy will and commandments, and to walk in the same all the days of their life.

IV. *A work, difficult; but not impossible.*

Baptized persons, at first, and for a time, are merely passive agents; then, in time, they come to have a will of their own, and to choose and act for themselves. Sunday-school teachers say they can influence their pupils while children; but when they grow up to be young people they escape from their grasp. In other words, they can manage passive agents, while allowed to choose for them; but are beaten by those who are governed by their own free-will and determination.

We must get over this difficulty by some means; and in this there is nothing more difficult than Methodism has already accomplished. If we can prevail on a baptized sinner to submit to Christ at fifty, we can do so at fifteen.

V. *No compromise with Satan or with sin.*

As a progressive system, the Gospel provokes a great deal of opposition. So long as it stands still, there is little or no opposition; but as soon as it moves on, the war begins. We are, however, exhorted to "put on the armour of light," and to advance, sword in hand, in the presence of our enemies, until religion become triumphant like the mid-day sun.

If you, Sunday-school teachers, will but act on this principle, you will very likely encounter opposition; but it will be followed by triumphant success. Should you become timid and frightened, so that you dare not do more than others have done before you, and endeavour still to be content to save a portion of the scholars, and suffer Satan to remain in the uncontrolled exercise

of authority over the bulk and majority of them, there will be but little apparent opposition. But this is not to render you drowsy and inactive; you are to aim at progress and improvement; knowing that however the enemies of the Gospel may threaten and oppose, God intends it to subdue the world.

Should you be urged to be content with saving a proportion of the children, say, in reply, only as Moses did to Pharaoh. The king of Egypt talked of allowing a part of his slaves and property to go into the wilderness, while the rest remained in the country, and under the power of their former oppressors. "No," said Moses, in reply, "we will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and our herds; there shall not an hoof be left behind." Let there be no compromise with Satan and with sin. Christ has redeemed the entire human race; the promise of the Holy Ghost is "unto you, and to your children." As the day succeeds the night, so the Gospel is to fill the earth, and drive sin and misery from the minds of men.

VI. *A holy alliance.*

The glorious issue of Christianity in the world is made to depend, not upon any particular class of people, but upon their zealous and persevering co-operation with each other. God is with us, as He was with the Israelites in the wilderness; and it is as much His purpose to sanctify the world by means of Christianity, as it was to bring them into Canaan. Still, it was necessary for them, and it is equally necessary for us, to act in fellowship, and sustain one another. When Joshua went to war with Amalek, he needed the prayers of Moses; and Moses himself required the assistance of Aaron and Hur. Sunday-school teachers must form a holy and evangelical alliance with all who can aid them in any way, either in imparting religious instruction, or in bringing down celestial fire from heaven.

VII.—*What the world wants.*

To me it appears that the great mass of practical wickedness in the world, and which Mr. Wesley calls "one of the greatest mysteries under heaven," is mainly owing to the fixed habit of religious people seeking to bring men and women to Christ, rather than children. They keep hacking at the branches, when they should lay the axe to "the root of the tree." . . . Assuredly, what the country and the world want, is some business-like method of making mankind moral, by impressing upon children the principles of evangelical religion.

VIII. *Why delay?*

Take a profligate adult found drunk in the street on a Sunday, a cannibal idolator from Fiji, and a child of the most holy parents,—and between them there is no difference, except that, in the one case, the principles of human depravity are *less*, and in the other cases *more* fully *developed*. If the child live, it is just as true of him as of the other two, that he must be "born again." Nothing else will do. *Then why delay?*

IX.

A MISSION, BY PERSONAL APPEAL, TO BAPTIZED BUT UNCONVERTED YOUTH.

[This idea (as intimated in a previous page) first suggested itself to Mr. Jackson in the year 1856; and from that time till his death, in 1861, he was never able to dismiss it from his mind. As "*Religious Examiners;*" as the "*Society for bringing children to a right religious decision;*" as "*Friends of Evangelization beforehand;*" or as the "*Mission to unconverted Youth;*"—he was constantly seeking to enlist the services of suitable persons for this specific object. He longed to see a few holy men and women working steadily in this way in every circuit in Methodism. This, he thought, would at once help parents and teachers to reap the harvest and fruit of all their toil, and ensure the success of "the Wesleyan mode of Confirmation" he advocated. We conclude with one of his Addresses on the subject, trusting that from among the readers of this volume many an earnest and successful *Missionary to unconverted Youth* will be raised up.]

1. Our business on the present occasion is to explain the nature, and press upon your attention the claims of a *Mission, by personal appeal, to baptized, but unconverted Youth.* A few of us have been for some time engaged in this work; but we find that there is a great deal to be done, and we want assistance. If any suitable persons will come and help us,—any who love the Lord Jesus Christ, and have a strong desire to advance His cause in the world,—they will be gladly received. Whoever is qualified for the work is sure to be successful, and will feel so much pleasure in it, that he will be induced to persevere.

From the title of this "Mission" you will perceive that it is to be conducted on the principle of *personal appeal.* We intend to work, not by schools, not by preaching, not by public meetings of any kind,—but

by simply appealing to individuals on the subject of conversion to God.

This "Mission" especially contemplates "*baptized* Youth," because the practice of infant baptism generally prevails in this country, and the bulk of our youth have been dedicated to God in this His own appointed ordinance. While we intend to begin with baptism, and make it the foundation of our appeal, wherever it has been administered, yet, should we meet with a youth who was not baptized in infancy, but still needs to be converted to God, we shall endeavour to lead him to Christ and salvation.

By the parties here contemplated we mean such young persons as have not yet testified their submission to Christ by a voluntary union with His church and people. All these are to be reminded that, though given in infancy to the Triune God, their Creator and Redeemer, time has now brought about a great change in their condition. They have now begun to choose, and decide, and act for themselves, and cannot be saved without their own consent. Having thus pointed out their present actual and very solemn condition, each one is to be asked, separately and seriously, *what he intends to do:* and, if possible, be prevailed upon to carry out and fulfil the great design of his baptism. . . . .

By the introduction of this new agency, we have not the slightest idea of superseding any of those which are at present so usefully employed. We are the friends of all, the enemies of none. Were our plan to receive ever so much encouragement, there would be no fewer sermons preached, no fewer prayer-meetings held, no fewer schools of any description. If, by our speaking to any young person, his conscience was to be reached and his heart subdued, he would become more diligent in hearing sermons, more attentive to prayer-meetings, and, if a scholar, far more serious and thoughtful than he had ever

previously been. In seeking the conversion of young people, we act as the friends of all who are conducting Missions, both at home and abroad. Prevention is better than cure. Those who give their hearts to God in early life are never likely to become such wicked adults as need to be converted from the error of their ways, but will prove to be "the light of the world," and "the salt of the earth." So that the general effect of all these combined agencies will be, to promote revivals of religion, to enlarge the kingdom of Christ, and to lessen the amount of human wickedness and misery.

Here it may be proper to observe that the only way by which Methodism can perpetuate itself is by continuing to put forth a converting power, and bringing men to love God and keep His commandments. Anyone, therefore, who suggests a mode of doing this is entitled to a hearing; and if his plan be found ineligible, some other should be adopted in its stead. It will not do to say the thing is impracticable. Methodists must not satisfy themselves by saying, "We cannot command success; we are doing what we can, and can do no more; if, therefore, what we are doing be not sufficient, we must leave the work undone." Methodism *has* converted sinners, and, by the grace and blessing of the Holy Spirit, it can still do the same. We propose to save souls by a "Mission to Young people." To this we are aware objections may be made; but it is hoped that every objection will be followed by some more eligible proposal. One plan may be laid aside, and another preferred; but whatever becomes of them, the word of the Lord must grow and prevail until it has subdued all hearts, and until every knee shall bow to Christ, and every tongue confess that He is Lord. . . . .

This question may be asked by a minister, or by any lover of Christ and of the souls He has redeemed. It is of little consequence by whom the question is pro-

posed, provided the right practical answer to it is but obtained. In worldly things men do not satisfy themselves with *trusting* and *hoping*, in matters which ought to be *known* and *ascertained*. A man is not content with merely hoping that he is entitled to a valuable estate, without at all troubling himself about the writings, but is sure to inquire whether or not *they* have been completed. Whoever loves his neighbour as himself will not be content with merely hoping that as such a youth was baptized when an infant, he is a Christian, and on his way to heaven,—but will *inquire* about his thoughts and designs, and seek to ascertain whether he intends to complete the work already begun.

2. To the friends now addressed it will appear perfectly proper that when *mixed* considerations have failed to lead a young person to religious decision, his attention should be directed to such as are *unmixed* and *simple*.

Many of the means employed to diffuse Christianity do it by motives partly religious and partly worldly. Both in schools and chapels religion is taught; but it is generally along with other things. Children go to school not only to learn how to save their souls, but also to seek a kind of knowledge that will be useful in this world. Even in Sunday-schools they learn many things that are secular, as well as others which are simply religious. Public worship is so performed as generally to mingle pleasure with profit. Much is often said about popular preachers, and the attractions of one congregation as compared with another. There are the charms of oratory, the delights of church-music, and the pleasure of meeting with friends. Even revival prayer-meetings appeal to the feelings, as well as to the conscience and the will,—which are the true seat of all morality and religion. Persons generally go there when they are deeply affected,—after listening to an impressive sermon,—when they

see or hear others under strong religious emotions,—when themselves tremble like the jailer at Philippi, or are filled with joy and peace in believing; but when their minds are perfectly cool and calm they have little inclination to religious exercises of this particular character.

If by any, or all of these means, young people have been truly converted,—if, in any school, or in any chapel, or at any prayer-meeting, they have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, and have found redemption in His blood,—it only remains for us to unite with them in returning thanks to God. But if all these means have been tried and *failed*,—if they have contrived to take just what they happened to like, and to leave what they disliked, and therefore still remain strangers to the religion of the heart;—if, while they have become eminent as scholars, they continue under the power of sin;—if they have heard sermons, and learned to admire popular preachers, but know nothing of pardoning mercy and converting grace;—if they have attended prayer-meetings, and often been deeply affected, while their hearts are not yet right in the sight of God;—then we must address to them *other* considerations, and make to them *another* kind of appeal. Then we must address ourselves at once to the *conscience* and the *will*, by reminding them of their personal responsibility, asking them what they are intending to do, and calling for an answer to that solemn question,—"Will ye also be His disciples?"

3. When *general* appeals have been unsuccessful, it is right to try such as are *personal* and *direct*.

Appeals on the subject of religion, both in schools and chapels, are commonly of a *general* character, being addressed to many individuals at the same time. Sunday-school teachers often speak at once to a whole class, or even to the entire school. Day-school masters commonly address a whole gallery full of children. Appeals from the pulpit are made at once to whole

congregations of hearers. We all know, from past experience, that evangelical discourses, when so delivered, will very seldom prove altogether unsuccessful. Hearts will be reached, consciences awakened, and sinners converted. While the bow is drawn at a venture, and at a distance, the arrow, Divinely directed, will enter in at the joints of the harness, transfix the rebel, and compel him to weep and to pray.

Yet, if we are to be guided by observation and matters of fact, this will be the case with but *some* out of many. While some have thus been converted and saved, many have remained unsaved and untouched. When young people have in this way been brought to Christ and salvation, of course we neither expect nor desire that any further message should be sent unto them. But when general appeals have been made and have *failed*, we are not to give up the case in despair. We must then go to each *individually*, as the mariners did to Jonah; ask the sleeper what he means to do; and, if possible, prevail upon him to arise, and call upon his God.

This is the design of our "Mission;" and this is the work in which we wish you to engage. But the harvest truly is great, and many labourers are required. If, every year, forty or fifty thousand young persons are to be solemnly appealed to on the subject of their own salvation, it is evident that, while parents, ministers, and Sunday-school teachers do all they can, they will require the assistance of all the devout men and women in Methodism who can be spared to take a part in this work of faith and labour of love. These agents should pervade the entire Connexion.

4. As it is not improbable that some will hesitate and draw back when they ought to come forward, it may be proper to say a word or two further on the nature of the work that we ask you to do.

It is not to very young and little children that we

ask you to speak; nor do we, at present, direct you to go to adult sinners; but we ask you, for the sake of Christ, to turn your attention to young persons from ten to twenty years of age. Not that it ever entered our minds, even for a moment, to imagine that unless people seek the Lord when they are between ten and twenty years of age, they are never likely to find Him at all; but simply because we think this is the most eligible period of life in which this work can be done. Then, you are likely to be heard with respectful attention; and a right choice, then made, will probably be adhered to through life.

Especially we are concerned for the elder scholars in our Sunday-schools, and such as have recently left them, as well as for the young people, religiously brought up, who have never been connected with such institutions. These are just beginning to think and act for themselves; they are just ready to enter that path in which most probably they will continue to walk, and which will fix their condition for all time and for all eternity. They feel themselves the possessors of a new power which they know not how to use. Very lately they listened to their teachers in the school, or went with their parents to the chapel; but they are now beginning to be their own masters. We entreat you to volunteer your services. Make up your minds to speak to these young people. They live in your own neighbourhood,—in some cases, possibly, in your own family. Remind them of their baptism. Ask them what they are intending to do. Take a little pains with them, just at this crisis of their religious history. Prevail on them to submit to Christ, to join themselves to His church, and place themselves under the care of Him who is the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls.

5. There is the highest encouragement for all who will engage in this enterprize.

It is true, young people are often thoughtless and

giddy, and it seems almost impossible to fix their attention on the subject of religion. All of them were "born in sin," and they have a deep and natural dislike to the Gospel of Christ. They are strongly inclined to follow the ways of the world, rather than to listen to the commandments of God. To prevail on even a baptized, but still unconverted youth, voluntarily to come to Christ and to submit to His rule, is as difficult as it is to open the eyes of the blind, or to raise the dead to life. But fear not; He that is for us is more than all that are against us. "The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live."

Nay, the Lord has already taken the lead in this enterprize. He has become our Leader, and has directed us to follow Him. "Deborah said unto Barak, Up;...is not the Lord gone out before thee?" There is a *conscience* in man, and whenever you speak seriously to a young person about his soul, and his baptism, and his Judge, you will find your way already prepared.

This power in human nature has indeed been a fruitful source of dispute. Some have called it "natural conscience," and have maintained that it never can lead, nor ever was intended to lead, men to evangelical salvation. Others, again, have asserted that conscience is a work of supernatural grace, and is a part of that "free gift" which has come "upon all men" through the death of Christ. With all these controversies you, in truth, have nothing to do. Leave them to be settled by other people. However conscience came into man, there it is; and whenever rightly appealed to, it is found on the side of Christ and salvation.

St. Paul sought to commend himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God. As soon as he delivered his message, his hearers knew that it came from heaven; and, when by his conduct he proved

himself to be such a messenger as God was likely to employ, they were disarmed and subdued. When a true Christian goes to young people, and speaks to them on the subject of their conversion, they know that he is the bearer of a message from heaven ; and when they are convinced that he is a good man, and therefore such a messenger as Christ was likely to employ, a powerful appeal is made to their conscience in the sight of God. They need not go up to heaven or down into hell, to ascertain the truth of what he says ; for they are already inwardly convinced that it is a message from God, and are prompted to believe on Christ with their heart, and to confess Him with their mouth. Such a visit is sure to give rise to a struggle ; many considerations invite them to a course of worldliness and sin ; and evil principles may for a time have the dominion. But truth is mighty, and it will prevail. The claims of conscience, if perseveringly pressed, are likely, in their case, to prove victorious. They will submit themselves unto God, and become the disciples of Christ.

Felix, indeed, said to the Apostle, "Go thy way for this time ; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." But, then, he was the Roman governor of Judæa, and was morally tied, hand and foot, by his bad habits and connexions. Had he been appealed to when a mere youth, it is probable he would not merely have "trembled," but would have been converted and saved.

Agrippa was "almost," but not altogether, persuaded to be a Christian. He was then a king, and therefore considered not merely what was right in itself, but also what was politically expedient. Yet Paul looked into his heart, and knew that he believed the prophets. His conscience and his convictions were all on the side of Christianity. Had he heard the Apostle at some earlier period of his life, very probably he would have become not only almost, but altogether, a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Go then, my friends, and engage in this work with a full persuasion of ultimate success. Should one attempt of this kind be successful, you will probably be led to make another. By practice you will become increasingly skilful and efficient; and God, in whose presence you speak, will be more and more pleased with all you say and do, and will more abundantly bless you and the young people you are seeking to save. Other Christians, hearing what you have done, will be led to imitate your example. A power will be thus awakened, and a machinery set in motion, the results of which it is impossible to foresee. "Who hath despised the day of small things?"

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